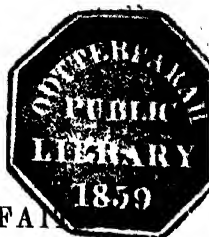


The
Popish Rule of Faith
VOL. 5

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THE POPISH RULE OF FAITH

EXAMINED AND DISPROVED.

Vol. V

BOOK I.

THEIR DOCTRINE OF INFALLIBILITY.

(CONTINUED.)

THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF TRUTH.

A TREATISE

SHewing THAT THE ROMAN CHURCH FALSELY CLAIMS TO BE THAT CHURCH, AND THE PILLAR OF THAT TRUTH, MENTIONED BY ST. PAUL IN HIS FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY, CHAP. III. VERSE 15.

WHICH IS EXPLAINED IN THREE PARTS.

TO THE READER.

AMONG all the places of Scripture, which they of the Church of Rome are wont to allege for a proof of their pretended infallibility, I find none whereon they more rely, than that of St. Paul to Timothy, 1 Tim. iii. 15: "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the CHURCH of the living God, the PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH." Which place, says the Rhemists, "pincheth the heretics wonderfully, and so it ever did; and therefore they oppose themselves directly against the very letter and confessed sense of the same."

I have thought it therefore worth my pains, to shew how unjust this accusation is; by opening the plain and evident meaning, the literal and confessed sense of those words: Whereby it will appear, that we are far from being heretics: and

that they, not we, are pinched by this place; and that there is no ground at all in it for their infallibility; nor for their vain flourishes, that the "very name of Church terrifies us, and makes us pale with fear," as Campian insolently vapoured,* and that we not only fear, "but altogether abhor the word CATHOLIC, so as to leave it clean out of our Bibles," as the forenamed Rhemists† most senselessly misrepresent us.

For as I have proved in the following book, that we, not they, are the true Catholics, so there is nothing further from truth (I have likewise shewn) than that the Apostle here speaks, with any particular respect, to the Church of Rome; which is so far from striking any terror into us, when it appropriates to itself the name of Church, that we look upon the pretence to be as ridiculous, as the proof is, they give us of it; which is the sole authority of a false St. Ambrose's Commentaries upon this place; who thus glosses: "All the world being God's, yet the Church only is his house: the rector (or ruler) whereof at this time is Damasus." Where the Rhemists‡ desire us to note, "how clear a case it was then, that the Pope of Rome, was not the governor only of one particular See, but of Christ's whole house, which is the universal Church," &c. And further improve this conceit, in these words; "the Church, which is the house of God, whose rector," saith St. Ambrose, "in his time, was Damasus, and now Gregory the Thirteenth, and in the Apostle's time St. Peter, is the pillar of truth, the establishment of verity; and therefore it cannot err."

And truly, it is worth our noting how clear a case it is that they were sorely pinched (to use their own word again) for want of proofs; when they betook themselves to such as this. For it is hard to think, that men of their education (whom we will not despise, as they do the heretics, a little before,§ as most ignorant of the Word of God, not knowing the very principles of divinity), should not know that St. Ambrose was not the author of those Commentaries; they being acknowledged, by the greatest men in their Church, to be spurious brats of some other writer. Baronius,|| for instance,

* Ratio III.

† Preface to Epistle of St. James.

‡ Annot. in 1 Tim. iii. 15. [vid. Cartwright's Confut. p. 554. Cambr. 1618.]

§ Annot in 1 Tim. i. 7. [Ibid. p. 539.]

|| Annal. tom. v. ad an. 397. n. 38. [n. 48. vol. 6. p. 245. col. 2. Luc. 1740.]

saith, "the exposition of Ambrose, upon all Paul's Epistles, began to be wanting in the time of Cassiodorus: but being plainly lost, it is apparent the work of another author was foisted in its room." And their other great Cardinal, Bellarmine, confesses as much in several places; but in one more fully,* where he assails an objection of Chemnitius (who following the rule of the Civil Law†, [the witness which any man produces for himself, he is bound to receive against himself] quotes this book, as Bellarmine oft had done, in a case of marriage) by this answer, "that the author of these Commentaries is not St. Ambrose, as learned men know: and more than that, whosoever was the author, he was none *ex celebratis patribus*, of the famous or eminent Fathers." And indeed, there is great reason for what these, and many others of that Church say; as I might shew out of the Commentaries themselves, which contradict the very words of the true St. Ambrose.

But suppose he had been the author, or these the work of some celebrated writer, it is a clear case (and I desire it may be noted) that these Rhemish annotators were not so knowing as they would be esteemed, or not so conscientious as they ought to have been; when they gather from those words, that Damasus was ruler over more than his own see, even over the universal Church, as St. Peter they say was in the Apostles' times. For St. Ambrose himself saith, in his book of the Priestly Dignity‡ (which priests, one would think, should read) that when Christ said, "Feed my sheep;" "those sheep, and that flock, not only blessed Peter then received; but both he received them with us, and with him we all have received them." And it is no unusual thing in ancient writers, to say the same of other bishops that this writer doth of Damasus, when they mean no more, but that they were rulers of that part of the catholic Church which was committed to their charge.

Thus Arsenius, for instance, writes to Athanasius, as he himself hath set down his letter, which begins thus: "We loving peace and unity with the catholic Church, over which thou, by the grace of God, dost preside or rule,"§ &c. And

* L. 1. de Matrimonio, cap. 17.

† Testem quem quis inducit pro se, tenetur recipere contra se.

‡ Tom. 4. de Sacerdotali dignitate, cap. 2. [vol. 2. Append. p. 359. Par. 1690.]

§ Athan. tom. 1. Apolog. 2. p. 786. [Par. 1627.] ἡς σὺ κατὰ χάριν θεοῦ προΐστασαι.

more than this, such great clerks as they should not have been ignorant, being also such lofty censurers of the heretics, that Gregory Nazianzen (called the Divine, whom they read, it is to be supposed, to learn the principles of Divinity) saith, "St. Cyprian was made not only a pastor, but a pastor that had the largest dominion;* being set over not the Church of Carthage only, or Africa, but all the west, and almost all the east itself, and the north and south, unto whom his fame reached." But if these things escaped their observation, or they studiously concealed them, they must have been most ignorant of the word of God, as they say the heretics are, if they did not know, that St. Paul saith the same of the elders of Ephesus, that this writer doth of Damasus, Acts xx. 28, that the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, to feed, that is, to rule and govern the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. And if they knew this, why were they not so honest as to interpret the latter by the former? For there is no difference between St. Paul's words, and the counterfeit St. Ambrose's. St. Paul saith, the elders of Ephesus were appointed to rule the Church of God (for that is the office of a shepherd, that feeds the flock); the other saith, Damasus was the ruler of God's Church. If the universal Church be thereby meant, and not his part of it only, why should it not be so expounded in the words of St. Paul? And then Damasus' title to this office is cracked; for there were rulers then set over the Church universal by the Holy Ghost, before he (or his Church of Rome, perhaps) was in being. But if St. Paul's words must have a more limited meaning; then with what conscience do they give their St. Ambrose's words an unlimited; and not restrain them, as they must do St. Paul's, to the particular see committed to his government?

And it was not easy for them to be ignorant that St. Paul, in these words to Timothy, speaks of the Church of Ephesus, and not of Rome, and was so far from having any thought of St. Peter (whom these annotators make the ruler, at that time, of this house of God), that it is evident Timothy was the person who presided in it, and was the chief "pillar and ground of truth" here spoken of, as I doubt not I have proved in the ensuing discourse. Wherein I have also shewn, that other succeeding bishops, in other Churches, had the same title; nay, many persons in the Church, that were no bishops, who

* *Κράτιστος*, &c. Orat. 18. p. 281. [Far. 1630.]

were far from thinking themselves, or being thought by others infallible, as these annotators imagine they must needs be, who are "the pillar and the establishment of truth." That is an inference from these words, for which they had no more warrant than they had to entitle St. Ambrose to these Commentaries.

The author of which also, did so little dream of the infallibility of the Church, when he glossed upon these words, that he doth not so much as make the Church "the ground or establishment of the truth:" but saith in plain terms, *Firmitas* (as the vulgar Latin translates ἐδραίωμα) *hujus veritatis signa sunt et prodigia*; the establishment of this truth (left in the Church) are signs and wonders which the Apostles, that is, wrought to bring men to the firm belief of that truth which they preached. Which doth not rely, therefore, upon the credit of the Church, but upon the credit of the Apostles, and of those divine works whereby God bare witness to them, which are recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

From whence alone we ought to derive our knowledge of the truth the Apostle here speaks of, as is most clearly resolved by St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in these memorable words: "Concerning the divine and holy mysteries of the faith, we ought not to deliver any thing, though never so small, without the divine Scriptures, &c.; neither shouldst thou believe me barely saying these things to thee, unless thou receivest the demonstration of the things, published out of the divine Scriptures. For this is the safety, or security of our faith, which depends not upon words that we invent, but upon the demonstration of the divine Scriptures."*

In which we hear our Lord Christ himself speaking to us, who is more to be believed than the Church "For the Church, as St. Paul speaks, is subject unto Christ (they are the words of St. Augustine),† and therefore the Church ought not to set herself above Christ, so as to think that they who are condemned by him may be baptized, but they that are condemned by the Church may not be baptized: when he always judges truly; but ecclesiastical judges, being men, are oft-times deceived."

From them, therefore, who are fallible, we appeal to him, who is infallible; and hath delivered his sentence in the Holy

* Catech. 4. Sect. de Spiritu Sancto. [p. 60. Venet. 1763.]

† Tom. 7. Contra Cresconium Gram. l. 2. c. 21. [vol. 12. p. 531. Bassan. 1797.]

Scriptures; or from a Church particular, we appeal to the Church catholic: nay, from the new Church of Rome to the old. For we are not, as they would make the world believe, affrighted with the name of the Church; whose judgment we truly honour, as will appear in this treatise: while they dishonour it, by confining the Church to themselves, and then exalting it above the Scriptures of truth, and making its mere name serve to dazzle the eyes of their own people, and to keep them in profound ignorance, teaching them* to oppose the name of a catholic man, and a catholic Church, as a sufficient answer to all that we most reasonably object against them. Thus, in their own conceit, it is a kind of Gorgon's head, which they fancy will immediately stupify us, when it is opposed to us: but, blessed be God, we are still in our wits, and understand very well that this is no better than his old artifice, "who invented this cheat (as St. Cyprian† speaks) of deceiving unwary souls by the very title of the Christian name." For just so they now abuse the name of Church, and the name of Catholic; "and by good words, and fine speeches," (as St. Paul writes, Rom. xvi. 18), deceive the hearts of the simple.

Whom I have endeavoured in this small treatise to undeceive, and direct in the way of that TRUTH, of which every Church ought to be "the pillar and ground." If any one be not, but instead of the certain, constant, universally received Christian truth, set up uncertain, nay, false, lately invented, and particular conceits of its own, it is not to be relied on, but rejected, though it hath been formerly a Church of never so great authority. Such the Church of Rome once was, but now ceases so to be: having, by taking upon her too much, lost that regard which otherwise she might have had in the Christian world. It is not the same Church it was in the Apostles' times, no, nor in the days of Gregory the Great; as hath been unanswerably demonstrated by Bishop Moreton heretofore,‡ and lately by the author of the "Vindication of the Answer of some late Papers," to which there will never be an ingenuous reply. Great and many alterations have been made therein, to the manifest prejudice of the Christian faith; of which that Church should have been, as well as others, "a pillar and establishment;" but hath notoriously failed in her

* Rhem. Annot. in 12. Luke 11. [ut supra, p. 184.]

† L. de Unitate Ecclesie. [p. 395. Venet. 1728.]

‡ Catholic Appeal, L. 1. cap. 2.

duty, by inventing another faith, which undermines and endangers that faith which was once delivered to the saints.

Of this I have given so full and so clear an account in these papers, that I fear not to expose them to the examination of them that are of a contrary mind: hoping, though they do not convince them of their errors, yet they will help to establish the people of our Church, in the present truth. Which, I doubt not, they will see to be the truly Catholic, Apostolic faith, which they ought not to part withal, but preserve as carefully as they do their life.

And so they cannot fail to do, if they "add to faith, virtue." In order to which, I have endeavoured to make this treatise as practical as I could, that we may not fall into that grand error, of thinking it enough to "hold the truth," though we "hold it in unrighteousness."

God, of his infinite mercy, deliver us all from that damnable delusion, "and establish our hearts unblameable in holiness, before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints," 1 Thess. iii. 13.

PART I.

INTRODUCTION.

It is a pious reflection which Clemens Alexandrinus makes upon a saying of Plato, that if "Truth could never have been learnt, but either from God himself, or from his dependents,* then we, who have the testimonies of the Divine Oracles, do justly boast that we are taught the truth by the very Son of God." Which he hath revealed unto us so plainly in all things necessary to our salvation, and transmitted unto us so entirely in the Holy Scriptures, that it cannot but be a great trouble to all those who love him and his religion, to see such wranglings about it in his Church, as if there were no more certainty among us, "What is truth?" than there was among the philosophers.

The contention about this is so sharp and fierce, that while

* L. 6. Stromat. p. 675. [p. 802. Venet. 1757.]

men seek after truth, they are in danger to lose the very aim and scope of it, which is charity—the love of God and of one another. This St. Paul determines to be the very drift of the Gospel, when he tells Timothy, “The end of the commandment is charity,” 1 Tim. i. 5.

Nay, they have raised so many doubts about this matter, that poor people are many times to seek for truth itself, even in the clearest light thereof. It being some men’s business, so to confound their thoughts, that they know it not when they see it, but are still in great trouble about it even when they have it.

And where to seek for it, is now grown a great question also. It is to be found, no doubt, in the Church; but about that there are so many disputes, that men are to seek as much as before if they go to find it there. In short, there are no words more abused than these two, “Truth” and “Church;” and therefore I hope it will do some service to souls, if for their plain and safe direction in these matters, I rescue those words of St. Paul to Timothy, 1 Ep. iii. 15, “The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth,” from those false glosses that are put upon them, to the great dishonour of our blessed Lord, and of his holy truth.

And for that end I shall distinctly treat of these four things :

First, What that truth is, of which either the Church, or Timothy, or both, were the “pillar and ground.”

Secondly, What it is to be a “pillar and ground” of the truth.

Thirdly, Who it is to whom this office and honour belongs, of being the pillar and ground of the truth; or what we mean, when we say, the Church is entrusted therewith.

Lastly, How it discharges this office.

I.

What is the Truth?

Here we must begin; because we must first know what the truth is before we can know a society of men to be the Church: which is constituted and made by believing and professing the truth.

And this in effect is a resolution of that question which Pilate asked our Saviour, but would not stay for an answer, “What is truth?”

Which though it be made a great difficulty by those whose

interest it is to make things intricate and perplexed ; yet, in my opinion, it is very easy to give satisfaction to it ; and we need not go far neither to seek it. For the Apostle himself immediately explains what he means by truth in the words following : “ And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness : God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

Where we learn two things in general concerning this matter. First, that the truth here spoken of is that which was formerly a mystery or secret, which lay hidden for many ages and generations in the unknown purpose of God, but now is revealed and manifested by the Son of God and his Holy Spirit, to make men godly.

Which is the other thing we learn from thence, that the truth, which the Apostle intends, is the mystery of godliness, or as he speaks in chap. vi. ver. 3. “ the doctrine which is according to godliness.” And therefore, whatsoever doth not tend to better men’s lives, by making them do their duties faithfully both towards God and towards men (to some of which the duties that are owing are in this very epistle called “ shewing piety or godliness,” chap. v. 4.), we are not to reckon it among the truths which were deposited with Timothy, to be preferred and upheld in the Church. For God did not design by the discovery he made of his mind and will in the Gospel, merely to enlarge our knowledge ; but to rectify our wills and affections by the right information of our minds, and by acquainting us with such weighty truths, especially such wonderful revelations of his love, as cannot but irresistibly sway us, if we lay them to heart, unto his obedience.

But, that we may not be left to guess at this truth, or “ mystery of godliness,” without any certainty, he sets down a particular of it, and reduces the whole mystery of godliness to these six heads.

I. The principal is this, that the eternal Son of God came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man ; that he might suffer for us, and make himself an offering for our sins. All this I take to be included in these words, “ God was manifest in the flesh.” Which cannot be meant of God the Father, for it is expressly said in other places that it was “ Jesus Christ who came in the flesh,” 1 John iv. 2 ; and is here declared to be God, that is, the eternal Son of God, the “ Word made flesh,” John i. 14. Which doth not denote merely his being made man, but like-

wise his suffering for us : he taking our flesh on purpose for this very end, that therein he might by his death make an atonement for sin. And so the very phrase "flesh and blood," signifies in Scripture (as it doth commonly in the Hebrew writers) this weak, frail, mortal suffering state, wherein we are at present, into which our blessed Lord put himself, when he manifested himself in our flesh. So we read expressly, Heb. ii. 14, where to take part with us, in our flesh and blood, is to make himself liable to sufferings and death. In these few words, therefore, are contained many principles of Christian truths, *viz.* that Jesus Christ was really God (not God the Father, whose being is here supposed, but God the Son), and that he was incarnate, and really made man, of the substance of his mother ; being perfect God and perfect man ; and as really "suffered for us in the flesh," as St. Peter speaks, 1 Pet. iv. 1. Which were the doctrines that were first assaulted by the devil and his agents in the beginning of our religion (such as Simon Magus and the rest of that tribe), but proved to be undoubtedly true by the mighty power of his Spirit.

II. Which is the second part of this mystery, "justified in, or by the Spirit." Which sufficiently convinced all gainsayers that he was no less than the Son of God, "though in the likeness of sinful flesh ;" and that "by a sacrifice for sin he condemned sin in the flesh," Rom. viii. 3. For as he was conceived in his mother's womb by the Holy Ghost, Luke i. 35, so at his baptism he was "anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power," Acts x. 38 ; there being then a visible descent of the Spirit of God in a glorious manner upon him, together with a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matth. iii. 17. And as it then "lighted on him," so it abode, and "remained on him," John i. 32, 33 ; as appeared by the power of such miracles, as neither men nor devils could work, but only the Spirit of God. Which was so evidently true, that to ascribe them to the devil was "the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost," Matth. xii. 28, 31, 32. Mark iii. 29, 30 ; by whose power not only devils were cast out, but even the dead were raised ; whereby he was manifested to be "the resurrection and the life," John xi. 25. By the same Spirit he himself also was raised from the dead, and declared again "the Son of God with power," Rom. i. 4. And having "all power in heaven and earth" given him, he sent the Holy Ghost upon his Apostles on the day of Pentecost, as a further justification of him, John xv. 26. Acts v. 32. Nay, more than

this, by the laying on of their hands poured it out upon others, who believed on his name, Acts ii. 38. viii. 17. Which was the "unction from the Holy One," whereby they "knew all things," as St. John calls it, 1 John ii. 20; *i. e.* were assured of all the Christian truth, revealed unto them. For all these were illustrious witnesses unto Christ, and justified this grand truth, that he was "God manifest in the flesh" (for such ends and purposes as he pretended), against all opposers, who accused it of falsity.

And who is there that doth not see several other principles of God's holy truth contained in this? Particularly, that the Holy Ghost is God, the third Person in the Holy Trinity, being the Spirit of God: which knows the things of God (as the spirit of man doth what is in him, 1 Cor. ii. 11); and led or guided the Apostles into all truth, John xvi. 13; and dwells in the whole body of the Church as his "temple," 1 Cor. vi. 19; (which no created spirit can do), and gave such a divine testimony to our Saviour, that to speak against it was unpardonable blasphemy.

That other great article of our faith also is included in this, which St. Paul declares in these terms: "though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God," 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

III. This was a thing notorious to the angels themselves: which is the third particular in this mystery; "was seen of angels;" both at his birth, Luke ii. 9, 10, 13, and in several passages of his life, Matth. iv. 11. xvii. 5. John i. 51; and at his death, Luke xxii. 43; and at and after his resurrection, Matth. xxviii. 2. John xx. 20; and also at his ascension, Acts i. 10, 11; when they testified to the Apostles that this "same Jesus who was taken up from them into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as they had seen him go into heaven." Where, when he came, they "all worshipped him," Heb. i. 6, and admired at the wonderful wisdom of God, which was made known to them by the Church (1 Pet. i. 12); especially this "mystery of Christ," as the Scripture calls it, which is the fourth particular in this catalogue of Christian truths.

IV. That this doctrine, thus confirmed and attested, was "preached unto the Gentiles;" who were assured that they should be made fellow-heirs with the Jews, and partakers of God's promise in Christ, by the Gospel, as St. Paul speaks (Ephes. iii. 8.) "Unto whom this grace was given, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all

men know what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world was hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

An astonishing grace this was; declaring the infinite love and kindness of God, that they who thought not of it, who had no promises to make them expect it, who were strangers to God and the covenant of promise, were on a sudden surprised with the revelation of God's good will to them in Christ, and by belief of it, were made "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." That is, the Church was made truly catholic; all the world being taken into fellowship with the Apostles, "whose fellowship was with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 3.

V. And another great wonder was, that notwithstanding all the opposition which was made by the potentates, by the philosophers and disputers of the world, by the devil also and his angels (who though they also saw him, and could not but confess him, yet set themselves against him with their whole power), and notwithstanding all the strong prejudices that were in people's minds against it, this whole mystery of godliness was entertained and received with great joy every where. Which is the fifth particular, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, "believed on in the world." "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed," as St. Luke speaks, Acts xix. 20. The reason was, because Christ, the Head of the Church, being raised from the dead, was exalted at God's right hand, "far above all principality and power, and every name that is named, either in this world or in the other:" so that neither men nor devils could hinder the propagation of the Gospel by the working of that "mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

VI. For that is the last part of this mystery of godliness, he was "received up into, or in glory;" that is, in a glorious manner received up into heaven. And being "gone into the heavens (as St. Peter writes, 1 Pet. iii. ult.), is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities and powers being made subject to him." So subject, that "from henceforth he expects, till all his enemies be made his footstool," Heb. x. 13; and having vanquished death, which is the last enemy, and raised men out of their graves, he will judge them according to their works. For he was received up into glory, to be the judge of quick and dead.

These are the principal points of that truth, which ought to be supported and maintained in the Christian Church; being the substantial and necessary articles of our faith, without the belief of which we cannot be Christians.

For the fuller explication of which, I shall make six observations: the first of which the Apostle himself here suggests; and the rest will fairly follow from thence.

1. First, the Apostle notes them to be such truths as were “without controversy;” about which there was no dispute among serious Christians.

2. And therefore these are the truly catholic doctrines, and these alone.

3. The fundamental truths, upon which our religion and the Church itself is built.

4. And therefore he that holds close to these cannot be a heretic.

5. But they that call men so, because they believe not other things, which they have made necessary, have rent the Christian Church, and are guilty of that sin, of which they falsely accuse others.

6. Which guilt is the greater, because the best and most learned men among them, have confessed those doctrines, which they have superadded to the ancient truth, to be doubtful, superfluous, and unknown to the first ages of the Church; that is, not truly catholic doctrines.

1.

The first of these ought to be well weighed; that the truth, which is to be supported and maintained in the Church, is so evident and so abundantly attested, that it is confessed by all Christians. Thus that word *ὁμολογουμένως*, “without controversy,” or confessedly, signifies, as we may learn from the use of it among the ancient Greeks; one of which [Diodorus Sinopensis] speaks of their supreme God, just as the Apostle doth of “the mystery of godliness.”*

Ὁ Ζεὺς Ὁ Φίλιος
Ὁ τῶν Θεῶν μέγιστος ὁμολογουμένως.

“Jupiter the Friendly is, without controversy, or by common consent agreed to be, the greatest of the Gods.” In like manner the Apostle is to be understood, when he saith the

same of these great and venerable doctrines of godliness : which are such as are confessed by all, by a common agreement ; and doubted of by none. For they are no other than those which are contained in the Apostles' Creed ; about which there is no question among Christians, but they all consent unto it, being baptized into the belief of those truths ; in which the whole Church hath agreed, everywhere, in all times, down from the Apostles' days, to this present age.

For the Church, saith Irenæus,* though dispersed throughout the world, to the ends of the earth, received from the Apostles and their disciples, the faith, which is “ in one God, the Father Almighty, who made the heaven, and the earth, and sea, and all that is in them ; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was incarnate for our salvation : and in the Holy Ghost, who preached by the prophets, the dispensations and approaches of God, and the birth of the Virgin, and the suffering, the resurrection from the dead, and the bodily ascension of our dear Lord Christ Jesus into the heavens ; and his coming from thence in the glory of the Father, to gather together all things, and to raise all human flesh ; that, according to the good pleasure of the Father invisible, every knee of things in heaven, or earth, or under the earth, may bow to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, and every tongue may confess him ; and he may do righteous judgment upon all ; and send the spirits of wickedness, and the angels that transgressed and apostatized, together with ungodly, unjust, lawless, and blasphemous men, into eternal fire ; but to the just, and the holy, and such as observe his commandments, and persevere in his love, either always or by repentance, graciously bestow life, give immortality, and put them in possession of eternal glory.”

This is, *σῶμα τῆς ἀληθείας* (as he calls it), “ a little body of truth ; the rule of faith” (as Tertullian often speaks), instituted by Christ ; which *nullas habet apud nos questiones*,† is not doubted of, nor hath any questions about it among Christians, but such as heresies have brought in, and which make men heretics.

And therefore this is the truth, of which the Church ought to be “ the pillar and ground,” to the end of the world : but not presume, as I shall shew anon, to bind all Christians, upon

* L. 1. *Contra Hæres.* c. 2. [c. 10. p. 48. col. 1. Venet. 1734.]

† L. de præscript. cap. 14. [p. 207. Par. 1695.]

pain of perishing everlastingly, to believe what is not contained in this rule of belief. For it alone is sufficient, as appears by this; that into it, "all the articles or parts (as a learned man of the Roman Church speaks)* of which a Christian consists, are digested, as it were, into one body."

From whence it follows, that these are the true catholic, and the only catholic doctrines. Catholic they are, because spread everywhere: and the only catholic, because none besides these, till very lately, were received as part of the Christian truth, which must necessarily be believed, if we hope to be saved.

Hear how Irenæus† proclaims this, immediately after the foregoing words; which Epiphanius‡ thought so considerable, that he hath transcribed both these chapters into his book against heresies. * *

"The Church as we have said, having received this preaching (or doctrine) and this faith, preserves it most faithfully, as if it inhabited but one house; though it be dispersed through the whole world. And with unanimous consent, preaches, and teaches, and delivers these things, as having but one mouth. For though there be different languages in the world, yet the force of that which is delivered is one and the same. So that neither the Churches situated in Germany believe otherwise, or have any other tradition, nor those in Spain, nor those in France, nor those in the East, nor those in Egypt, nor those in Libya, nor those in the midst of the world; but as the sun, that creature of God, is one and the same in the whole world, so the *τὸ κήρυγμα τῆς ἀληθείας*, the preaching, or doctrine of the truth shines everywhere, and enlightens all men, who are willing to come to the knowledge of the truth. And neither he, among the governors of the Church, who is most powerful in speech, teaches different things from these (for no man is above his master), nor he that is weak in speech diminishes the tradition. For there being one and the same faith, neither he that is able to speak a great deal concerning it, doth enlarge or exceed; nor he that can say but a little, doth take away, or make it less."

Which is such a plain declaration that the Creed contains

* Rigaltius Ib. [p. 206. col. 1.]

† L. 1. cap. 3. [ut supra, p. 49.]

‡ Hæres. 31. n. 30, 31. [vol. 1. p. 201. col. 2. 202. col. 1. Colon. 1682.]

the whole Apostolical tradition (or faith, for they are the same in his language), and the only catholic doctrine ; that if we were at this day to contrive words on purpose, for the asserting this truth, we could not invent any more full or express than these. Which shew us that this faith is sufficient not only for the ignorant, the catechumens, and beginners in religion ; but for the most improved in Christian knowledge ; for those that instructed and ruled the Church, who had no authority to preach or impose any other belief.

This is a thing that runs through his whole book ; for he repeats it again, in fewer words, in the latter end of the next chapter, that “the true Church hath but that one and the same faith (before mentioned) throughout the whole world.” Which in the 19th chapter, he calls “the rule of truth,” by which all error was discovered : “for holding this rule, though they speak very various and many things, we easily evince that they have deviated from the truth.”

And again, in the third book,* he hath recourse to the same rule of truth, “unto which whosoever will hearken, may see what is the tradition of the Apostles, manifested in the whole world, in every Church.” Where he saith, they were able to tell what bishops were settled by the Apostles and their successors, until his time ; who neither taught nor thought of any thing like to the dotages of the heretics of those days. And because it would have been too long to reckon up all the Churches, he instances in the Church of Rome (to which all had occasion to go, upon some business or other, because it was the imperial city), by whose bishop he saith, “that tradition, and that preaching, or doctrine of truth, which was from the Apostles in the Church, is come to us ; and is a most full proof, that one and the same life-giving faith, which was from the Apostles in the Church, is conferred to this time, and delivered in truth. The very same, which Polycarp wrote to the Philippians” (mark these words, which they of the present Roman Church were wont to conceal, that they may make the world believe Irenæus thought the tradition of the Apostles, that is, the Christian faith, was to be sought only in their Church), “and which was in the Church of Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John continuing in it, till the time of Trajan : which Church is a true witness of the tradition of the Apostles.”

* L. 3. cap. 3. [ut supra, p. 175. col. 1.]

And that there may be no mistake about this tradition,* he repeats it again in the next chapter, and informs us (in very remarkable words) it was nothing else but the doctrine contained in the Creed.

“ Since these things are so plain, we ought not to seek further, among others, for truth ; which we may easily find in the Church : for the Apostles left most fully in it, as in a rich repository, all things that belong to truth : so that every one who will, may take from thence the water of life, &c. (out of the holy Scriptures, he means, as appears by what follows) ; and suppose the Apostles had not left us the Scriptures, shall we not follow the order of the tradition (or rule of faith), which they delivered to those unto whom they committed the Churches ? To which ordination many barbarous nations, who believe on Christ, assent, having the doctrine of salvation, without paper and ink, written by the Spirit in their heart, and diligently preserving the ANTIENT TRADITION : believing in one God, the maker of heaven and earth, and of all things which are therein, by Christ Jesus the Son of God ; who out of his most eminent love to his creature, vouchsafed to be born of the Virgin, uniting man to God by himself ; and suffering under Pontius Pilate, and rising again, and being illustriously received in glory, shall come again, the Saviour of those that are saved, and the judge of those that are judged : sending into eternal fire, the mis-shapers of truth, and the contemners of his Father, and of his coming. Those that have believed this faith without letters, we, in our language, call barbarous : but as to their opinion, and custom, and conversation, they please God, because of their faith, by which they are most wise ; living in all righteousness, chastity, and wisdom. Unto whom, if any one should speak in their language those things which heretics have invented, they would presently stop their ears, and run away, not enduring to hear the blasphemy. Thus by that OLD TRADITION of the Apostles (*viz.* the Creed), they do not so much as admit into their thoughts, the portentous talk of those heretics in his days.”

These things I have thought fit to set down, the more largely, because they are an evident demonstration, what the OLD TRADITION of the Apostles is, which is nothing else but that summary of Christian truth contained in the Creed ; unto which they would suffer no other tradition to be added, but

* L. 3. cap. 4. [*Ibid.* p. 178. col. 1.]

contented themselves with this, as fully sufficient: and by this judged of all other things, that pretended to come from the Apostles, and were everywhere so well instructed in this, that in those Churches, which as yet had not received the Apostolical writings (the holy Scriptures of the New Testament) they had this doctrine, as the contents of those Scriptures; and were thought most wise (being wise enough to salvation) in this faith alone, without any other.

But because this is such a very important truth, I shall take a little more pains to set down the sense of the Church in all ages, concerning it, that the reader may be satisfied there is no other truth but this alone, which is absolutely necessary to his salvation: which ~~they~~ sometimes comprehend in fewer words, but never add any one article, beyond those in the Creed.

If we had the letters of Ignatius entire and sincere, we should be able to tell what he took for truth, immediately after the Apostles were dead. And thus much is evident from them as they now are, that they or he who contrived the Epistle to the Philippians, under his name (for it is not thought to be his), took this to be the doctrine of that second age: when, after the mention of the doctrine of the Trinity, and that the Son of God was truly made man, truly born, and truly crucified, dead, and rose again (not seemingly, not in appearance only, but in truth), they make him conclude *ὁ ταῦτα πιστεύσας μακάριος*. "He that believes these things as they are, and were really done, is a blessed man." Which is an undoubted testimony that they took this Creed to be sufficient to salvation: which Ignatius, in an unquestioned Epistle of his to the Church of Smyrna, calls the unmoveable faith, wherein he blessed God, they were perfected, or knit together, mentioning no other articles, but those before named.

Polycarp also, in the same age, wrote an Epistle to the Philippians, wherein they that had a mind, and took care of their salvation, might learn the "character of his faith and the doctrine of truth:"* which was the very same as Irenæus relates in the forenamed chapter, with that set down by him, which he calls that "one and only truth which he received from the Apostles, and delivered to the Church."

And what they taught in Asia, and Irenæus in France, that Tertullian, in the latter end of the same age, taught in Africa,

* L. 3. cap. 3, 4. [Ibid.] et Euseb. Hist. l. 4. c. 14. [p. 128. Par. 1659.]

that there is but "one only immoveable, irreformable Rule of Faith"* (that is, "there is no other form of believing but this," as de la Cerda honestly interprets the word *irreformabilis*), "in one God Almighty, the Creator of the world, and in his Son Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised the third day from the dead, received up into heaven, and sitting now at the right hand of the Father, and shall come to judge the quick and the dead, by the resurrection also of the flesh."

This he calls in that place "the law of faith," which he sets down, in more words, in another book, where he prefaces to it by this remarkable proposition, as he calls it,† "that there is one, and the same certain doctrine instituted by Christ," which all people ought to believe, and consequently to seek that, when they have found it, they may believe. Now the inquisition of one certain appointment cannot be infinite: which is an encouragement to seek till one find, and believe when he hath found, because there remains, saith he, "nothing more but to preserve and keep what thou hast believed. For thou believest this also, that there is nothing else to be believed. And therefore no further inquiry to be made, when thou hast found and believed, that which was appointed by him, who did not command thee to inquire after anything, but what he appointed."

Upon which principle having a little further enlarged, he proceeds to lay down the "rule of faith‡ (that one certain appointment, which if one believe, there is nothing else to be believed), whereby we believe there is one God alone, and no other but the Creator of the world, who made all things of nothing, by his word, emitted before all things. That word called his Son, seen variously in the name of God by the patriarchs, heard in the prophets, and at last brought down by the Spirit and power of God the Father into the Virgin Mary, made flesh in her womb, and born of her, became Jesus Christ, and thereupon preached the new law, and the new promise of the kingdom of heaven; wrought miracles, was crucified, rose the third day, was taken up into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of the Father, sent the vicarious power of the Holy Spirit, who works in believers; shall come in glory, to take holy persons to the enjoyment of eternal life, and the celestial

* L. de Velandis Virg. c. 1. [ut supra, p. 173.]

† L. de Præscription. c. 9. [Ibid. p. 205.]

‡ lb. chap. 13. [p. 206.]

promises, and to condemn the profane to everlasting fire : both parties being raised up again, with the restoring of the flesh."

This is the rule, about which, he there saith, there are no questions : the rule, in which faith entirely consists, that faith which will save a man, unto which curiosity ought to yield : for "to know nothing against the rule, is to know all things." And beyond this rule, he there expressly argues* there is nothing to be believed : for if we still be to seek for faith, where shall we rest ? Where shall we make an end of seeking ? Where shall we make a stand and stay our believing ? Or where shall a full stop be put to finding ?

And that this was the constant doctrine of those times and places, it appears from hence, that as Irenæus often repeats this rule, and this alone, so doth Tertullian a third time insist upon this, even after he became a Montanist, as the only rule that had run down to their times from the beginning of the Gospel : which he had always professed, and how much more, being more fully (as he fancied) instructed by the Paraclete, the leader into all truth. Who durst not (it seems, though he pretended to revelations) adventure to alter this rule, which Tertullian recites again† in the same terms, without any enlargements, as he had done in his former books.

And thereby satisfies us, that he did not casually make this the rule of faith, but that it was his constant sense, which though he did not express in the very same words and syllables, it only shews they had no other sense but this in their minds. And, as Vigilius‡ speaks about this very matter, *nec præjudicant verba, ubi sensus incolumis permanet*, the words do not make a wrong opinion, where the sense remains safe and sound. Which may be applied to all the forms of belief, which were in the Church of Rome, of Aquileia, and in the Churches of the East, before the great Council of Nice : none of which differ in sense (though in some words they do), nor have one article of faith more than the Creed now contains : which Tertullian§ once more calls the "Rule of Truth, which comes transmitted from Christ by his companions," or Apostles : and in another place most significantly, "that ONE EDICT OF

* Ib. chap. 10, 14. Ubi enim erit finis quærendi ? Ubi statio cre-
deadi ? &c.

† Adv. Praxeam, cap. 2. [Ibid. p. 501.]

‡ L. 4. adv. Eutychianos.

§ Apolog. cap. 47. [ut supra, p. 37.]

GOD, which hangs up (as the edicts of the Emperor did in a table) to be read by all.”*

Nor was there any other faith in the next age to this (in the third century), as we may be satisfied from Origen, who in his preface to his books *περὶ Ἀρχῶν*, thinking it necessary first to lay down a certain line, and manifest rule, by which to inquire concerning other things, and having distinguished between things necessary to be believed, and those which are not necessary, he gives the sum of those things which were manifestly delivered by the Apostolical preaching: and it is nothing else but the present Creed, about which, he saith, there is “one sense of the whole Church.”

And in his first book against Celsus, who said the Christian religion was *Κρύβιον δόγμα*, “a clancular doctrine,” which they hid and concealed, he avows that the Christian doctrine was as well known in the world as the opinions of philosophers: “For who doth not know that we believe Jesus was born of a Virgin, was crucified, rose again from the dead, will come to judgment, and punish sinners, and reward the righteous according to their deeds? Nay, the mystery of the future resurrection is divulged, though laughed at by unbelievers.” These were the great things which were commonly taught, and all obliged to believe; as for others, which were not common, the philosophers, he tells him, had their abstruse doctrines as well as Christians. To this purpose we meet with a notable passage in Epiphanius (in the succeeding age), which shews that the substance of the Christian faith concerning our Saviour, was commonly known even by those who did not profess it, and understood to be this which Origen mentions. For a Jew coming to see an eminent man of his nation who was sick, whispered this in his ear, when they despaired of his life,† “Believe in Jesus who was crucified under Pontius Pilate the Governor, being the Son of God, and afterwards born of Mary, the Christ of God, and raised from the dead, and that he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.”

St. Cyprian‡ also plainly shews there was no other faith in his Church; when he answers those who said, the Novatians held the same law that the catholic Church held, and baptized into the same Creed; believing the same God the Father, the

* De Resurrect. Carnis. cap. 18. [Ibid. p. 335.]

† Hæres. 30. n. 9. [ut supra, p. 133.]

‡ Epist. ad Magnum de bapt. Novat. edit. Rig. p. 152. [Par. 1649.]

same Christ the Son, the same Holy Ghost; that this would not avail them (for Korah, and Dathan and Abiram believed the same God with Moses and Aaron); and besides, they did not believe remission of sins, and eternal life, by the holy Church; since they had left the Church.

Lucianus also, a famous presbyter of the Church of Antioch, and a martyr for the faith of Christ, left a form of believing, written with his own hand,* if we may believe the bishops assembled at Antioch, who sent it about in the time of the Arian controversy, to prove they were none of his followers, but held *τὴν πίστιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐκτεθεῖσαν*, the faith which had been set forth from the beginning: and it is this, as Socrates reports it;† “We have learnt from the beginning to believe in one God of the whole world, the maker and preserver of all things intelligible and sensible; and in one only begotten Son of God, subsisting before all worlds, and being together with the Father who begot him; by whom all things were made, whether visible or invisible; who in the last days came down, by the good pleasure of the Father, and took flesh of the holy Virgin, and having fulfilled the whole will of his Father, suffered and rose again, and returned to Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and shall come to judge the quick and dead, and remaineth King and God for ever. And if it be needful to add it, we believe the resurrection of the flesh and life everlasting.”

I will not trouble the reader with a larger creed of theirs which there follows, more fully explaining the doctrine of the Trinity; because it belongs to the following age, cent. IV.

In which, it is known the Nicene Fathers met to settle the controversy about the Son of God; but did not make any new creed, or add one article to what had been believed before, but only explained one article, the sense of which the Arians perverted. No, they were so far from enlarging the Christian faith, that when they met together they recited no other Creed, but that of the Apostles; as Laurentius Valla affirms he had read in some ancient books of Isidore, who collected the canons of old Councils. And accordingly, when they had drawn up that Creed which they published, they did not think they had made the least change in the matter of faith; but declared that this‡ was the Creed delivered by the holy Apostles. Which

* Sozomen. L. 3. c. 5. [p. 98. Cantab. 1720.]

† L. 2. Eccles. Hist. c. 10. [p. 87. Cantab. 1720.]

‡ Epiphanius in Anchorat. [ut supra, p. 122.]

St. Ambrose* in that age calls *clavem*, the key, St. Jerome *indicium*, the mark or sign of faith; in which, after the confession of the Trinity, and of the unity of the Church, the whole mystery of the Christian religion is concluded in the resurrection of the flesh. And which Gregory Nazianzen, in his second letter to Cledonius, calls† *σύντομον ὅρον τινὰ καὶ κανόνα τοῦ ἡμετέρου φρονήματος*, “a short boundary and rule of our sense or judgment;” *i. e.* of the faith of Christians.

St. Austin especially, in a great number of places, declares that this is the only faith required to make a man a Christian. Particularly in his book‡ he wrote on purpose about this matter; which he begins thus, “Since the just live by faith, the greater care must be taken that faith be not corrupted;” and then adds, “Now the catholic faith is made known to the faithful in the Creed.” Which having explained, he concludes his book in these words: “Which few words are known to the faithful, that believing they may be subdued to God; and being brought under his yoke may live aright; and living aright, may cleanse their heart; and their heart being cleansed, they may understand what they believe.”

In like manner, before he begins the explication of the book of Genesis,§ he sets down what the catholic faith is; because heretics were wont to draw the Scriptures to their own sense, against the catholic faith. And the catholic faith, by which he considers all things, is nothing else but that in the Nicene Creed; beginning with the belief “of God the Father Almighty,” and concluding with the belief of “eternal life, and the promise of the heavenly kingdom.”

Which is agreeable to the direction he gives to others, in his book of Christian Doctrine;|| that in all ambiguous things the rule of faith be consulted, lest any sense, that is contrary thereunto, be admitted. Which, he elsewhere saith,¶ is “the rule of faith common to little and great in the Church.”

It is needless to add any more out of that Father; and I shall but briefly mention the creed of Pope Damasus in the same age (among St. Jerome’s works),** which is only a con-

* Serm. 38. [vol. 2. Append. p. 435. Par. 1690.] Hieron. Epist. ad Pammach.

† Orat. L. 2. beginning. [p. 93. Par. 1840.]

‡ L. de Fide et Symbolo. tom. 3. [vol. 11. p. 505. Bassan. 1797.]

§ De Genesi ad Literam L. imperfectus. [Ibid. vol. 3. p. 123.]

|| L. 3. c. 2. [Ibid. p. 58.]

¶ Epist. 57. [Ep. 187. ibid. p. 895.]

** Tom. 4.

fession of the blessed Trinity, with the rest of the articles concerning the conception, birth, death, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and coming again of our blessed Saviour, to raise us from the dead, and to give to every man according to his works; concluding with these observable words: "Read these things, believe these things, retain these things; subjugate thy soul to this belief, and thou shalt obtain life and reward from Christ."

But the words of the great Athanasius alone are sufficient to this purpose; in the letter which he, and the bishops with him, sent to the Emperor Jovinian,* where they tell him the faith confessed by the Nicene Fathers, is that which was preached ἐξ αἰῶνος, from the very beginning: "Unto which all the churches every where consent, whether they be in Spain or Britain, or France, or all Italy; with those in Dalmatia, Dacia, Mysia, Macedonia, and all Greece, all Africa, Sardinia, Cyprus, Crete, Pamphylia, Lycia, Isauria, Egypt, Libya, Pontus, Cappadocia, and their next neighbours, with all the churches of the East (a few excepted who were Arians), whose minds they knew, and whose writings they had to produce. And then, having set down the Nicene Creed, they conclude: In this faith it is necessary for all to remain, as Divine and Apostolical; and not to change it." For which he gives this reason, in another account of it, to Epictetus,† bishop of Corinth; "because it is sufficient for the overthrow of all ungodliness, and for the establishment of a pious faith in Christ."

Which is a plain declaration, that this faith is not defective; and that in the Creed commonly ascribed to him, there was no intention to add any new article of faith, but only to explain the old. For a whole synod (*viz.* that at Sardis) forbade, he tells us in another place,‡ any other faith to be written but this, with which all should rest contented, διὰ τὸ μηδὲν αὐτῇ λείπειν, &c. "because there was nothing wanting in it, but it was full of godliness:" and that there ought no new faith to be set forth, "lest this should seem to be imperfect, and occasion should be given, to them that had a mind, to be often writing and defining concerning faith."

I omit that confession of faith which St. Basil makes, in his

* Tom. 1. p. 245. [vol. 1. p. 399. Heidelb. 1601.] et Theodoret. L. 4. Eccles. Hist. c. 3. [p. 150. Cantab. 1720.]

† Tom. 1. p. 582. [ut supra, p. 453.]

‡ Epist. ad Antioch. p. 576. [Ibid. p. 449.]

Book of the true Faith;* and two others in Epiphanius; of both which he saith, that they contained “the faith of the holy Church,”† and that they were “delivered by the Apostles.” Which is a further confirmation, that though they added many more words to the Apostles’ Creed, yet they added no new article of faith; but only expounded, more largely, the meaning of some part of it, upon the occasion of some heresies, which troubled the Church in those times. When it was so far from their thoughts to add any new thing to the first Creed,‡ that among the numerous creeds we find, in Athanasius,§ in Eusebius, and others, there is not one of them, that makes any such attempt.

Nor did the second General Council of Constantinople design any more; but only *καρύναι*, to strengthen and confirm the Nicene faith, as Socrates speaks.§ Which Constantinopolitan Creed, or one very like, Cyril of Jerusalem expounded in his Church; and saith, it was the “only faith delivered by the Church, and fortified by all the Scripture.”|| “For since all are not able to read the Scriptures, and some by their want of understanding, others by their business, are hindered in acquiring that knowledge, therefore, lest men’s souls should be lost by ignorance, we have comprehended, in a few sentences, τὸ πᾶν δόγμα τῆς πίστεως, the whole doctrine of faith. Which he earnestly presses them to have written not in paper, but in their hearts; and to carry it about with them as their *viaticum* in the whole course of their life; and besides this, to receive no other. No, saith he, if I should change my mind, and teach the contrary, do not believe me; no, nor an angel from heaven, as the Apostle speaks, if he should preach any other Gospel, but that you have received. For these articles of faith were not, as it seems, composed by men; but the principal things being gathered together out of the SCRIPTURE, they fill up one doctrine of faith.”

But it is more than time to proceed to the fifth age, in which we find them so stedfast in this persuasion (that the ancient Creed contained all things necessary to be believed), that the Fathers assembled in the third General Council¶ at

* Tom. 2. p. 354.

† In Anchor.

‡ Epist. de Synodis Arim. et Seleuciz. [ut supra, p. 673.]

§ L. 5. cap. 8. [ut supra, p. 168.]

|| Cateches. 5. p. 44. [p. 78. Venet. 1763.]

¶ Can. 7. [Act. 6. Labbe, Concil. vol. 3. p. 689. Lut. Par. 1671.]

Ephesus, expressly decreed, that "it should not be lawful for any man to produce, or write, or compose *ἑτέραν πίστιν*, any other faith, besides that defined by the Nicene Fathers."

And that, "if any durst be so bold as either to compose, or offer any other faith to those that would be converted from heathenism, or Judaism, or whatsoever heresy; if they were bishops or clergymen, they should be deposed; if laymen, they should be anathematised." By which we may learn what would have become of the Pope himself, if he had attempted then, what his successors in these latter times have done.

For so sacredly did they keep to this, that St. Cyril of Alexandria* tells Joh. Antiochenus, they could not endure that the faith defined at Nice, or the symbol of faith there made, should by any means be shaken: "nor do we suffer ourselves or others to change one word of what is there, or to go besides it, so much as in one syllable; remembering him that said, 'Remove not the ancient land-marks, which thy fathers have set thee;' for it was not they that spake, but the Spirit itself of God, and the Father." Which he confirms by the forementioned letter of Athanasius to Epictetus: which some, he saith, had set forth adulterated and depraved, and therefore he transmits it to him sincere and uncorrupted, out of ancient copies. And he had the greater reason to say they could not alter one word of it; because the Council of Ephesus itself, though it decreed against Nestorius, that the blessed Virgin was *Θεοτόκος*, "the mother of God," yet they would not add that word to the ancient Creed; but thought it sufficient to determine the point against him. This Cyril further declares in an epistle to Acacius;† where he confutes those who accused him of receiving a new creed, in these words: "None ever required of us a new exposition of faith, nor do we admit of any from others; *ἀπόχρη γὰρ ἡμῖν ἡ θεόπνευστος γραφή*, &c. for the divinely-inspired Scripture sufficeth us, and the vigilance of the ancient Fathers, and the symbol of faith; which is exactly conformed to all right opinions."

And it is well known, that the next General Council at Chalcedon, renewed this canon of the Council of Ephesus: decreeing in the very same words, with very little alteration, that "no man should produce or write any other faith, nor think or teach otherways;" under the penalties beforemen-

* Tom. 5. pars 2. p. 108. [Lut. 1638.]

† Ib. p. 112.

tioned; only with this difference, that to laymen are added monks, against whom the Synod decreed an anathema, if they presumed to teach any other faith.

In the sixth age, the same was again repeated in the fifth General Council at Constantinople, under the Emperor Justinian; they solemnly professing, in their third session, that they embraced all the four foregoing General Councils; which is renewed in their eighth session, and all their decrees confirmed, with a particular defence of the last Council at Chalcedon; concluding with the same solemn decree, that none should dare to teach or write anything contrary to those constitutions; but if he were a bishop or clergyman he should be deposed; if a monk or laic, anathematized.

Justinian himself also in his epistle to the bishops at Constantinople,* takes special notice, how the Fathers in the Council at Chalcedon anathematized those who had delivered, or do deliver "any other Creed, but that which was expounded by the three hundred and eighteen holy Fathers, and explained by the one hundred and fifty Fathers; that is, the Apostles' Creed," expounded by the two first General Councils at Nice and Constantinople. "For we† would have you know (saith he) those things which were expounded and defined by the four holy Councils of Nice, Constantinople, Ephesus the first, and Chalcedon, concerning ONE AND THE SAME FAITH, we keep and defend and follow them, and all that are consonant to them. And whatsoever is not consonant to this, or may be found by any person written against those things, which were defined concerning ONE AND THE SAME FAITH, in those four Councils, or in one of them, that we execrate, as altogether abhorrent from Christian piety." And this Emperor was no mean divine (though Baronius is pleased to slander him as *illiterate*, and presumptuous for meddling in matters of faith), for Pope Agatho himself, and the whole sixth General Council, who approved of Agatho's letter,‡ put him in the rank of the most excellent Fathers and ecclesiastic writers. For to prove out of the Fathers, two natures in Christ, he tells Constantine Pogonatus, that St. Cyril, St. Chrysostom, and a great many other bishops, whom he names, taught this, *et præ omnibus*, &c. "and above all these, the zealous defender of the true and

* In Collatione 1. quintæ Syn. [Labbe, vol. 5. p. 420.]

† Tom. 5. Labb. Edit. p. 422.

‡ Conc. 6. Act. 4. [Ibid. vol. 6. p. 664.]

Apostolic faith, Justinian the Emperor of pious memory, whose integrity of faith did as much exalt the Christian commonwealth, as by the sincerity thereof, it was pleasing to God," &c.; which is enough to make the defenders of the present Roman Church blush at the insincerity of their great annalist, who makes this Emperor to have been a perfect block, not past his A, B, C,* whom one of their own Popes (who lived in the next age to him, and is sainted by them) makes equal (to say no more) unto St. Chrysostom, and the greatest bishops that had been in the Church.

I might add the praises which Pope Gregory the Great gives of him in many places; but I shall rather observe, how he in the latter end of this age, concurs with him, and with the forenamed Councils, in this opinion; that no other faith but this was to be admitted. For giving an account of his faith,† as the manner was, upon his advancement to the Papacy, and speaking of the four first General Councils in so high a style, that he professed to receive and reverence them, "as the four Books of the holy Gospel;" he gives this reason for it: "because on these, as on a square stone, the structure of the holy faith ariseth, and the rule of every one's life and action consists. So that whosoever doth not hold this solid ground, although he appear a stone, yet he lies out of the building:" after which words, he also professes his veneration of the fifth Council, and approves of all that they ordained.

This custom (in the Roman Church particularly) of giving an account of their faith, to their brethren, when they were newly advanced to the priesthood, is mentioned by Pope Gelasius;‡ and seems to have been begun, upon occasion of the great factions which were raised against the Council of Chalcedon. Whereupon Childeric king of France, as soon as Pelagius was advanced to the See of Rome, upon the death of Vigilius (whose sentence had been condemned as heretical in the fifth Council), desired to know if he held the definition of the Council of Chalcedon (which contained the Nicene, Constantinopolitan, and Ephesine faith): unto which, he answered in a letter, which is in the body of the Canon Law,§ that he received the definitions of the four General Councils

* Ad An. 528. n. 2. [vol. 9. p. 390, 391. Luc. 1741.] 551. n. 2. [Ibid. vol. 10. p. 64.] and many other places.

† L. 1. Epist. 24. [Ibid. vol. 5. p. 1045.]

‡ Epist. 2. ad Laurentium Episc. [Ibid. vol. 4. p. 1163.]

§ Decret. pars 2. Causa 25. q. 1. c. 10. [vol. 1. p. 1440. Lugd. 1671.]

concerning the catholic faith ; and then having rehearsed the Creed, "I believe in one Lord, Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost, *viz.* the Father Almighty," &c. he thus concludes. "This therefore is my faith, and the hope which is in me by the gift of the mercy of God ; of which St. Peter commands us to be ready to answer to every one who asks a reason, or an account of us."

From which it appears sufficiently, that they had no other account to give of their faith, in those days, than that which we now give in our Church ; who believe all that they did then, and believe, as they did, that nothing more is necessary to be believed.

But it will be useful if I give a brief account also of the sense of the following ages in this matter. And in the seventh age, Pope Agatho, before-mentioned, sent a Synodical Epistle (from himself and one hundred and twenty-five bishops assembled at Rome) to the sixth General Council, held also at Constantinople, in which there is a confession of their faith (which they say they were taught "by the Apostolical and evangelical tradition") : which consists of no more articles than are in the foregoing Creeds. It is inserted into the acts of that General Council,* wherein those Creeds were again recited and confirmed, in the same words, and under the same penalties, as in the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon ; with a severe prohibition of so much as *Καινοφωνία*, "a new manner of speech, or invention of a word," to the subversion of what was then determined.

Which was done more largely in the Council immediately following, called *Πενδέκτη* (being a kind of supplement to the former sitting in the same place), where it was decreed, in the very first canon, that "the faith delivered by the ministers of the word, *τῶν θεοκρίτων Αποστόλων*, the divinely chosen Apostles, who were eye-witnesses to him, should be preserved *ἀκαινοτόμητον* without any innovation, immutably and inviolably." And then they ratify distinctly the decrees of the Nicene Council, and the other five following General Councils, which they name in order, with the occasion of them ; and conclude with these words : "we neither intend to add anything at all to what was formerly defined, nor to take away anything ; nor can we by any means do it."

In these two Councils Pope Honorius was condemned as

* Sess. 4. [Act. 4.] Sextæ Syn. [ut supra, vol. 6. p. 677, &c.]

an heretic ; which I mention only for this reason ; that the ground of his condemnation was, because he had consented to the defiling of the “undefiled rule of Apostolical tradition,” viz. the Creed. They are the words of Pope Leo II. who receiving the acts of the sixth synod, which were transmitted to him, anathematized Honorius, because he “had not adorned that Apostolical Church, with the doctrine of Apostolical tradition.”

In the next age (which was the eighth after Christ), the second Council at Nice, which set up the worship of images, passed the same condemnation upon him ; and making mention of the six* foregoing Councils, “they confirm and establish all that had been delivered from the beginning :” only they fraudulently add, to bring in their image-worship, “whether written or unwritten.” Which made the first alteration in the doctrine of the Church ; all the foregoing Councils having derived their faith wholly from the Scriptures. As the following Council at Frankfort did, where, as the worshipping of images was condemned, so the holy Scriptures were highly extolled, in words which signified they thought them their only safe directors. The thirtieth chapter of the second Book of the Capitulare of Charles the Great, abounds with such expressions as these, “the Scripture is a treasure that wants no good, but is redundant in all that good is.” And in the beginning of the third Book, he and the Fathers there assembled, give an account of their faith, in a Creed, which they entitle, “A confession of the catholic faith, which we have received from the holy Fathers, which we hold and believe with a pure heart.” It is that in St. Jerome’s works, inscribed, *Symboli explanatio ad Damasum I.* Which they thus subscribe, “This is the true integrity of the catholic tradition of faith, which we believe and confess with a sincere heart, &c. This is the true faith, this confession we preserve and hold ; which whosoever keeps whole and undefiled, he shall have everlasting salvation.”

Thus far, therefore, they were not got beyond the first Creed, of which this is the explanation. Nor was John Damascen himself advanced any further ; but confined his belief to what is contained in the Law and the Prophets, Apostles and Evangelists, οὐδὲν περαιτέρω τούτων ἐπιζητοῦντες,† “seeking for nothing beyond these.” “For since God is good, and envies nobody,

* Act. 7. [Ibid. vol. 7. p. 555.]

† L. 1. Orthod. Fid. cap. 1.

he concludes that he hath revealed there all that is profitable for us, and concealed only those things we are not able to bear. And therefore let us love," saith he, "these things, let us abide in them; not removing the eternal boundaries, nor going beyond the Divine tradition."

Which they seem to have preserved, without exceeding the ancient limits, in the beginning of the ninth age. For in a Council at Mentz,* care is taken for teaching the people the Creed (which they call *signaculum fidei*, the seal of faith) and the Lord's Prayer; for which end they are required to send their children to school, or to the monasteries, or their parish priests, that they might "rightly learn the catholic faith and the Lord's Prayer."

Hitherto, therefore, the catholic faith was contained in the common Creed, which had been from the beginning. But towards the latter end of that age, the Council of Constantinople † (which the Roman Church calls the eighth General Council) began to talk of the *Regulæ Patrum*, the Rules of the Fathers (instead of the ancient word *Regula fidei*, the Rule of Faith, which is the Apostles' Creed), and called them the secondary oracles. And therefore professed not only to "hold all that the catholic Church received from the Apostles, and the General Councils; but from any father or great doctor in the Church." Which was the ready way to change the faith of the Church; and to turn particular men's opinions, into matter of common belief; though no new article was as yet put into the ancient Creed.

The two next ages are acknowledged to be so barbarous, by the writers of the Roman Church, that they are ashamed of them: and in some collections they have made of the Councils, there is not so much as one mentioned in the tenth age.

And in the following, there were so many frivolous things debated, and such corruptions crept into the Christian doctrine, that they run on very fast, to the introducing a new creed into the Church.

Yet this is remarkable, that in the time of Thomas Aquinas, who flourished in the thirteenth century, the Scripture still continued the only rule of faith; and the Apostles' Creed, a sufficient summary of the faith therein contained. For in the

* An. 813. Can. 45. [Labbe, vol. 7. p. 1251.]

† An. 869. Act. 10. Can. 1. [Ib. vol. 8. p. 1126.]

resolution of this doubt, why should articles of faith be put in the Creed, since the Scripture "is the rule of faith, to which it is not lawful to add, or from it to substract;" his answer is,* that the truth of faith is diffusively, and after divers manners, and sometimes obscurely contained in Scripture: so that long study and exercise is required to find out the truth of faith there, which they that have abundance of business have not leisure to use. "And therefore it was necessary, that out of the sentences of holy Scripture, something manifest and clear should be summarily gathered, which should be propounded unto all to be believed: which truly is not added to the holy Scripture, but rather taken out of the holy Scripture."

And resolving next of all, that doubt, "There is one faith," (as the Apostle saith, Ephes. iv.) "but many creeds," his answer is,† "That in all the creeds the same truth of faith is taught. But it was necessary the people should there be instructed more diligently in the truth of faith, where errors sprung up, lest the faith of the simple should be corrupted by heretics. And this was the cause why it was needful to set forth more creeds, which differ in no other thing but this: that those things are explained more fully in one, which are contained implicitly in another."

To the same purpose, many other of that sort of writers declare their sense, in the following ages.

And this also is worthy of great remark, that no longer ago, than at the Council of Florence, begun 1438 (which the Greeks call the eighth General Council) the authority of the above-named Ephesine canon, about holding to the Nicene Creed, was pressed with great earnestness by the Greeks, upon the Latins there assembled. For they said it was by no means lawful to add, μήτε συλλαβὴν, μήτε λέξιν, μήτε ῥῆμα,‡ "not so much as a syllable, nor a phrase, nor a word;" and laid such a weight upon it, as to affirm, "No man will accuse that faith of imperfection, unless he be mad." And§ they likewise backed it with a passage in a letter of Pope Celestine to Nestorius,|| where he saith, "Who is not to be judged worthy of an anathema, that either adds, or takes away?" καὶ γὰρ ἡ πίστις ἡ παραδοθεῖσα παρὰ τῶν ἀποστόλων, οὔτε προσθήκην, οὔτε

* Secunda 2dæ. Q. 1. Art. 9. ad primum. [vol. 22. p. 9. col. 2. Venet. 1787.]

† Ib. ad Secundum.

‡ Tom. 13. Lab. Sess. 10. p. 162.

§ Ib. p. 163.

|| Ib. p. 167.

μείωσιν ἀπαιτεῖ. “For that faith which was delivered by the Apostles, requires neither addition nor diminution.”

Unto which the Roman bishops had nothing to reply, but that the canon did not forbid “another exposition, *σύμφωνον τῇ ἀληθείᾳ*, consonant to the truth in that Creed;”* but only *διαφορὰν ἢ καὶ ἐναντιότητα* “any thing that was different, or contrary to it.” Both these they acknowledge to be prohibited, in those words, “No man shall bring in another faith than at Nice,” *δηλονότι ἐναντίαν ἢ μαχομένην ἢ διαφέρουσαν ἢ ἀλλοτρίαν ἢ ξένην ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθοῦς πίστεως*, “that is, contrary, or opposite, or different, or diverse, or strange from the true faith.” Where it is remarkable, a “different, another faith,” is acknowledged to be forbidden, as well as a contrary. Nay, they acknowledge, that none but a General Council could make so much as *ἐτέραν ἔκθεσιν*, “another explication” of the articles of that Creed, though not different from it.

In the Creed of the Apostles that is, there are some things contained implicitly (as Thomas Aquinas, you heard, speaks), and being virtually there, either in the letter or the sense, may be drawn from thence by evident consequence (such as the Deity of Christ, his two natures, the catholic Church, which was included in those words, “I believe the holy Church,” as this article is expressed in the old Roman Creed, and the like), and yet such an explication, these Fathers confessed, could by no man, no assembly of men, less than an Œcumenical Council, be lawfully made and imposed upon the Church. For which they quote Aquinas (whom† they call *ὁ ἅγιος Θωμᾶς*) that there never was *ἀνάπτυξις ἐν τῷ συμβόλῳ*, an “explication of the Creed, but in an Œcumenical Council, and he speaks of any creed whatsoever, which was common in the Church.”

And therefore, in conclusion, they absolutely deny that the Latin Church had added any thing to the Creed. “For the Nicene and the Constantinopolitan Creed are both one: so that the one being read, the other is understood: for though they differ in words, they agree in sense and in truth. And the like they affirm of all other Creeds; and thereby answer the objection, that they had added a word to the Creed, about the procession of the Holy Ghost, from the Father, and the Son; which is true, they confessed, with respect to the words, but not with respect to the sense. For still the Creed remains *ἐν καὶ ταυτὸν*, *εἰ καὶ διαφέρει τοῖς ῥήμασι*,‡ one and the same;

* Ib. p. 167.

Ib. p. 163.

though it differ in the words. And therefore it follows, it was not properly an addition, but one and the same thing, *ἡ τῆς ταυτοῦτος ἐκθεσις*, or the exposition of the very self same thing."

All which I have set down thus largely, to shew that thus far therefore, all things continued as they had done from the beginning: that is, notwithstanding the new opinions there were in the Church; there was no new creed made, no new article added to the Creed; nothing, but what had been so at the first, made necessary to salvation.

Which is the last thing I observe, that till the conclusion of the Council of Trent, that is, till a little more than a hundred years ago, there were no other creeds, but those which we confess and believe in this Church: which are the Apostles' Creed expounded, not enlarged by any new articles. But then, indeed, Pope Pius IV., in pursuance of the Council's order, framed another confession of faith, consisting of no less than twelve new articles, added to the old; never heard of in any creed throughout the whole Church, till this time. And it must be called and esteemed a new faith: and it makes that to be a new Church; which falsely calls itself the ancient Catholic Apostolic Church of Christ. For it is none of these, neither ancient, nor catholic, nor apostolic; but new, Roman, Tridentine Church; derived, I mean, from the Roman bishops at Trent.

It will be fit, I think, to set down this New Creed; that the reader may compare it, with those I have shewn were hitherto the entire faith of the catholic Church. It may be found in several of our writers; but I wish it were in every body's hand, and therefore take the pains to transcribe it, for the benefit of those into whose hands this book shall come.

POPE PIUS'S CREED.

I, N. believe and profess with a firm faith, all and every thing contained in the symbol of faith which the holy Roman Church uses, viz. I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, &c. to the end of that we call the Nicene Creed. After which immediately follow the New Articles, in these words:

The Apostolical and Ecclesiastical Traditions, and the rest

of the observations and constitutions of the same Church, I most firmly admit and embrace.

I also admit (or receive) the holy Scripture according to that sense which the holy Mother Church (to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense) hath held and doth hold ; nor will I ever understand or interpret it, otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.

I profess also, that there are truly and properly seven Sacraments of the new law, instituted by Jesus Christ, our Lord ; and necessary to the salvation of mankind, though not all of them necessary to every man, viz. baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, extreme unction, orders, and matrimony : and that they confer grace ; and that, of these, baptism, confirmation, and orders, cannot be repeated without sacrilege.

I likewise receive and admit all the received and approved rites of the catholic Church, in the solemn administration of all the abovesaid sacraments.

All and every thing which was defined and declared about original sin and justification by the most holy Council of Trent, I embrace and receive.

I profess likewise, that in the mass is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the quick and the dead ; and that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, there is truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and that there is a conversion made of the whole substance of bread into his body, and of the whole substance of wine into his blood : which conversion the catholic Church calls TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

I confess also, that under either kind (or species) only, whole and entire Christ, and the true sacrament is received.

I constantly hold there is a purgatory ; and that the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful.

As also, that the saints, who reign together with Christ, are to be worshipped and invoked ; and that they offer prayers to God for us ; and that their relics are to be venerated.

I most firmly assert, that the images of Christ, and the Mother of God, the always Virgin, as also of other saints, are to be had and retained, and due honour and veneration to be bestowed on them. ●

I affirm also, that the power of indulgences was left by

Christ in his Church, and that their use is most wholesome to Christian people.

I acknowledge the holy catholic and apostolic Roman Church, to be the mother and mistress of all Churches : and I promise and swear true obedience to the Bishop of Rome, successor of St. Peter, the prince of Apostles, and vicar of Jesus Christ.

All the rest also, delivered, defined and declared by the sacred canons and Œcumenical Councils, especially by the most holy Synod of Trent, I receive and profess without doubt ; and likewise all things contrary, and whatsoever heresies condemned, rejected, and anathematized by the Church, I in like manner condemn, reject, and anathematize.

This true catholic faith, without which no man can be saved, which at present I freely profess and truly hold, I will most constantly retain and confess entire and inviolable (by God's help) to my last breath ; and take care, as much as lies in me, that it be held, taught, and preached by my subjects, or those whose care belongs to me in my office.

I the aforesaid N. promise, vow, and swear : so help me God, and these holy Gospels.

This Bull (as they call it) bears date on the Ides of November, 1564, and concludes in the usual manner, with threats of the indignation of God, and of his blessed Apostles St. Peter and Paul, against all that shall infringe or oppose it.

And every reader, I suppose, discerns that this is not merely a confession of faith, but likewise a solemn oath. And so the title of it bears, "A Bull concerning a Form of an Oath of Profession of Faith." Which oath all ecclesiastical persons, whether secular, or regular, as they distinguish them, and all military orders, are bound to take.

And it is as easy to observe, that this is perfectly new, both as an oath, and as a profession of faith. Never was there any such creed imposed before, or so much as framed ; much less tied upon men by an oath. For when these Fathers met at Trent, and were to make a profession of faith, by rehearsing the Creed which the Roman Church uses* (so the words are), they could find none to profess, but the Nicene Creed ; no larger Creed was in use ; no, not there, in the Roman Church ; but these very men, who afterward turned new Creed-makers, were forced to be content with that.

* Sess. 3. [Labbe, vol. 14. p. 744.]

And, therefore, this new profession is most impudently pretended to be the true catholic faith ; being in no sense catholic, neither as to place, nor time. For it was no where used, till they made it, no, not there ; nor is now every where believed ; and was not at all believed in any Church for above 1500 years ; nor now used in that Church itself, when they admit members into the catholic Church by baptism ; but they are put into a state of salvation, by believing, as before, the old Nicene Creed alone.

Which is a direct contradiction to their new Creed, which they make necessary to salvation ; but can never shew to be contained implicitly in the old. For it is as possible to draw water out of a pumice, as to extract out of the Apostles' Creed, the doctrine of transubstantiation, worshipping of images, seven sacraments, the traditions, and other constitutions used in the Roman Church. Which was never so much as thought to be the mother and mistress of all Churches ; or to have power to impose new articles upon the whole Church ; especially such large ones, as take in all the definitions of that Council of Trent ; which they themselves are not agreed, to this day, how to expound.

Nor had that Synod, if these articles could have been shewn to be contained in the old Creed, any power to explain it, and declare them (according to what they confessed at the Florentine Council) being far from a General Council ; no, not of these western parts of the world.

And clearly shewed itself to be but a factious party in the Church, by that very explication which they made of this article, “ the holy catholic Church ; ” which they thus expound, “ the holy catholic, apostolic Roman Church, the mother and mistress of all Churches.” For it is certain the Apostles could not intend the Roman Church should be comprehended under the catholic Church, any more than every other Church, which was then, or should be hereafter ; because it was not in being : there was no Roman Church at all, when, notwithstanding, the Church was catholic.

And hereby salvation is impiously confined to the Roman Church alone, by making the catholic Church of no larger extent than that.

And this against the resolution of their greatest doctors, who think it no matter of faith to be persuaded that the Apostolic See is fixed to Rome. Which Bellarmine* proves

* L. 4. de Pont. Romano. cap. 4. [p. 454. col. 2. 455. col. 1. Prag. 1721.]

from hence, because neither Scripture nor tradition affirm it. Nay, if Christ had bidden Peter to place his See at Rome, he doth not think it would follow, that he placed it there immoveably. And therefore no man, according to their own sense, is bound to believe the Apostolical Church cannot be separated from the Roman; which if it should happen, and the Apostolic See be removed, suppose to Paris; the Creed must be altered again, and it must run thus: "I believe the holy Catholic and Apostolic Parisian Church, the mother and mistress of all Churches."

In which latter part of the exposition to this article, they force men to swear to a downright falsehood. For if the Roman Church be the mother of all Churches, she must be the mother of her grandmother, the Church of Jerusalem. And it is no truer that she is the mistress of all Churches: for all Churches were not taught the faith by her; nor do they own her authority over them.

But it is time to draw to an end of this matter.

We, in this Church of England, have always professed and preserved a true reverence to the four first General Councils. One, or rather two, of which hath forbidden, under the greatest penalties, any man to produce, or compose, or offer any other faith, besides that established by the Fathers at Nice; which Theodoret* in innumerable places calls *Ἐκθεσις*, the "exposition of faith," and *πίστις ἐκτεθεισα*, "the faith expounded," the Apostolical faith explained.

And, therefore, even for this reason alone, we cannot receive the Creed of this Council at Trent, which is manifestly another faith, added to the confession of the Nicene Creed; which old Creed, it is madness (as the Greeks at Florence said) to think insufficient. For it is to think they were all damned for 1500 years and more, who knew nothing beyond this necessary to be believed; which no man in his wits can believe.

For it is contrary to the very faith itself; which teaches us, as Tertullian speaks, "to believe this in the first place, that there is nothing to be believed beyond this." And we believe so, with the greatest reason, because to admit any other articles of faith, is to make endless schisms in the Church; as to believe contrary articles, is to fall into dangerous heresies. We know not where to stay, if we rest not here; for by the

* L. 1. Hist. Eccles. c. 7. [p. 25. Cantab. 1720.] L. 2. c. 22. [Ibid. p. 102.] L. 4. c. 2. [Ibid. p. 148.]

same authority that made these, more additions may be made continually, without end.

There is therefore no such authority in the Church, that can do this; but the Church which pretends to it, hath thereby forfeited the authority, which otherwise it might have had. As the Church of Rome hath done; which in the conclusion of that Council, contradicted what is asserted in the beginning. For there, in its entrance, as I observed,* they thinking it necessary, according to the example of the Fathers, to make, in the very first place, a confession of their faith; and pretending to arm themselves thereby, as with a shield, against all heresies, they repeat the creed, *quo Sancta Romana Ecclesia utitur*; which the holy Roman Church useth, as "that principle in which all that profess the faith of Christ, necessarily agree; and the firm and ONLY foundation, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail." And they think fit to express it *totidem verbis*, in so many words, "as it is read in all Churches:" and then they say the Nicene Creed, and not one word more.

Which is a plain confession, that this was the faith of all Christians, and no more, till that time; that it was the only firm foundation; that which was read in all Churches; in which all agree; the shield against all heresies; the whole faith then used in the Roman Church. And therefore with what conscience could we make such a division, and miserable distraction in the Christian world, as they have done; by a vast number of new articles, in which all Christians neither do nor can agree; and which were not to be found in their own Creed before?

No reason can be given of this, but the immense ambition of that Church, to give law to all others. Unto which we cannot with a good conscience submit; especially when they impose such a heavy yoke as this belief. Which is the true makebate between them and us; the manifest cause of that fearful schism, which they, not we, have made, by altering the true catholic faith, and Church, and communion, into a Roman.

This is the true distinction between them and us. We are Catholics, they are Romans. We believe the catholic faith of all Christians; they (as distinguished from us) believe the Roman faith, which none believe but themselves. We

* Sess. 3. Decretum de Symbolo fidei. [Labbe, ut supra.]

believe that which hath been ever believed ; they believe that which was never believed, till yesterday, in comparison with the ancient faith. Ours is the belief of the whole body of Christian people ; theirs the belief of a sect.

For the truth I have shewn, which ought to be supported in the Church, is nothing else but those uncontroverted mysteries of godliness, contained in the Apostles' Creed ; which I have proved to be the only catholic doctrines, embraced by all Churches whatsoever. They being not the doctrines of a sect merely, but in which we, the Roman, the Greek, the Ethiopian, the Syrian, and all other Christians, are perfectly agreed.

There are particular men, and some small companies of them, here and there, who understand some few of these doctrines otherwise than they ought ; but there is no national Church, of any country, but entertains all these entirely and sincerely, as they have been expounded from the beginning, according to the Nicene Creed (which by the way, is the only creed the Abyssinians have, that Creed called the Apostles' being not found among them),* and thereby are members of Christ's body, though they do not believe other doctrines ; which are only boldly called Catholics, by the Roman Church, but are not truly so ; but only particular doctrines of their own Church, in which the catholic faith and Church is not concerned. As they themselves confess, by admitting persons into the catholic Church (which I noted before) unto remission of sins, and eternal life, without any other belief, but that which we profess.

Which makes us think that we might more safely swear, they themselves believe this to be sufficient ; then they swear, as they do, that none can be saved without the new faith, which they have added to the ancient Creed.

I have been the larger in this second observation, because it is of great moment for the settling of our minds in peace, about right belief : and this being settled, I may sooner dispatch those that follow.

3.

And the next is, that these therefore, and these alone, are the fundamental truths, upon which our religion, and the very Church itself is built.

* Ludolph, *Histor. Æthiop.* l. 3. c. 5. num. 20.

By fundamental truths or doctrines, we mean such catholic principles as are necessarily to be distinctly believed by every Christian; whereby they being built, as it were, upon them, become a Church.

Such truths, no doubt, there are; for the Church being called here the "House of God," must have a foundation. Which foundation is either personal or doctrinal. The personal foundation is Christ, the chief corner-stone, and the Apostles and Prophets, as ministers of his, who laid this foundation, Ephes. ii. 20. The doctrinal are those grand truths taught by them; which make up our faith in Christ. That common faith, as it is called, Titus i. 4, that faith which is "alike precious in all;" 2 Pet. i. 1, the "first principles of the oracles of God;" Heb. v. 12, (or as it is literally in the Greek, the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God) "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," or "the word of the beginning of Christ;" Heb. vi. 1, "the form or draught, the breviate or summary (as it may be translated) of sound, words, or doctrines," 2 Tim. i. 13; "the faith once, or at once delivered to the saints," Jude 3; and particularly "committed to the trust" (1 Tim. vi. 20.) of those who were to instruct others in the common salvation.

And what can those truths be, but those doctrines contained in the Creed; which, it appears from what I have said, the Apostles left in all the Churches which they planted; for we find these were in every Church, as Irenæus assures us; and these "altogether one," as Tertullian speaks, and "the immoveable, unreformable rule of faith:" and therefore may thence conclude, they were that *παρακαθήκη* which St. Paul deposited with Timothy, 1 Tim. vi. 20, that good, or that fair, most excellent thing deposited with him, or commended (as an ancient writer translates it) to his trust, to be preserved by him; the Creed, as Cyril* of Jerusalem pithily speaks, being *ἀνακεφαλαίωσις σύντομος τῶν ἀναγκαίων δογμάτων*, "a brief sum of necessary doctrines."

In some sense it is true, there is nothing revealed in holy Scripture, but it may be called fundamental; if we respect only the Divine Authority, by which it comes unto us; upon which account nothing there delivered may be denied, but ought to be believed, with all humility, when the knowledge of it is offered to us. But if we respect the matter and

* Catech. 4. p. 24. edit. Paris. 1640.

moment of all things contained therein, we cannot but see there is a great difference; and that the knowledge of everything there is not equally necessary, but we may be truly pious though we should be ignorant of some of them. For who can think, for instance, that it is of the same necessity, to be able to give an account of the genealogy of our Saviour (mentioned Matth. i. Luke iii.) and to believe that he is the Son of God, made flesh for our salvation?

That foundation therefore which was laid in every Church (as it was at Corinth, 1 Cor. iii. 11.) were such doctrines concerning Jesus Christ, as every Christian was bound to learn, and actually believe: in other points it sufficed if they had a pious preparation of mind to learn and believe anything revealed in the Scriptures, when it was sufficiently clear to them.

Now these two things, that they are such fundamental truths, or first principles, and that they are no other than those contained in the Creed; ought to be asserted and maintained for the honour and glory of God our Saviour; which is much concerned herein. For it tends much to the glory of the Almighty lover of souls, that it should be believed he doth not lay equal weight upon all truths, nor made them alike necessary to be received, for the obtaining his favour and grace; and that it should be certainly known, and be without controversy and question, what those truths are, which he expects should be received and heartily embraced, in order to our salvation. For otherwise, the most of Christian people must necessarily perish; who either are not capable of knowing more than these great things, or have not the means of knowing more, or not with any certainty; but must be content to rest here. As well they may; for why was the Creed called by the name of the Symbol of faith, but because it was the mark, or sign, which might serve to distinguish true Christians, who embraced it, from infidels, or misbelievers, who did not receive it, or were defective in it?

This is the true reason of the name of Symbol, which is as much as *tessera et signaculum, quo inter fideles et perfidos secer- nitur*,* the token, "mark, or badge, whereby the faithful were known and distinguished from the perfidious." And therefore it comprehends briefly, all the fundamental points of faith; else it could not be a distinctive note or character, sufficient to sever right believers from infidels, heretics and apostates.

* Maximus Taur. de Trad. Symb.

But so it was, that they who owned this Creed, were owned for Christians; they who did not confess it, were rejected; for by a man's answer to this, who was examined, he was discovered (just as a soldier is by the word) *si hostis sit, an socius* (as both Isidore and Ruffinus before him speaks), "whether he were an enemy, or a fellow soldier of Jesus Christ." To this test alone every one was brought, by this touchstone he was tried, whether he were a Christian of the right stamp, or a false adulterate coin (as the ancients speak), which is a demonstration that they looked upon this as a perfect summary of the Catholic faith; "sufficient of itself (as you heard Athanasius* speak) for the overthrow of all impiety, and for the establishment of piety in Christ. Nay, this sense of the word Symbol, is owned by the Roman Catholicism itself." Cap. i. quest. 3.

4.

From whence it necessarily follows, that no man can justly be called an heretic, who heartily embraces, and stedfastly holds to this faith. How should he, when there is no catholic, no fundamental article of Christian truth; but he is persuaded of it, and professes it? No part of that Creed, which is the sign, the mark, and note, as you have heard, whereby Christians are approved, and discerned from misbelievers, as well as unbelievers, which he doubts of, and doth not acknowledge.

It is a very lamentable thing, that the imputation of heresy should be so frequent and familiar among Christians; upon the account of different opinions only, which they are passionately in love withal, though no parts of the catholic faith. They of the Church of Rome especially, are so foully guilty of this, and so strangely fiery, that they not only account us heretics; but look upon us as little better than infidels, nay, seem to have more kindness for Jews, which they tolerate among them, when they will not suffer us; who believe all the Creeds that were known in the Church for above 1500 years. For they call themselves Catholics, in distinction from us, whom they will not allow to be members of the catholic Church; though we have a clearer title to it than themselves. For I have shewn that we unfeignedly believe whatsoever is truly catholic, and reject nothing but what is merely Roman.

* Epist. ad Epictetum. [vol. 1. p. 453. Heidelb. 1601.]

We embrace that form of faith, which themselves say,* was composed by the Apostles for this very end, that all might think and speak the very same thing; and that there might be no schisms among them, whom they had called to the unity of faith; but they might be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

It is not our fault then, that there is not this unity and perfect agreement; for we stedfastly hold that which should thus link us all together; but it is their fault, who have forsaken this apostolical method, by making another form of faith, which instead of uniting, hath broken Christians all in pieces. For we cannot agree to that, because it doth not contain catholic truths, which according to Vincentius's rule, have been held every where, always, and by all; but are the tenets only of a particular Church; which hath no power to lay any other foundation than that which was long ago laid, in the truly catholic Church.

Which catholic Church we believe better than themselves, who appropriate the name of Catholics to their own party; and thereby restrain the catholic Church, to those of their opinion. This certainly was the heresy of the Donatists; who esteemed all other Christians to be no better than Pagans;† and were reprov'd by the true Catholics, just as we now answer for ourselves, in such words as these, "Do you call one a Pagan, after the profession of the faith? Can he be a Pagan who hath believed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?" For that is a short Creed, which comprehends all the articles of the Christian faith, as St. Hilary ‡ discourses; who not only calls this *forma fidei certa*, the certain form of faith; but (having mentioned those words, "Go, baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost") asks this question, "What is there that is not contained in that same sacrament, of human salvation? Or what is there, that remains or is obscure? All things are full and perfect, as coming from him that is full and perfect." And thus he concludes all his books on that subject, with this prayer:§ "I beseech thee, preserve this undefiled religion of my faith, and grant me this voice of my conscience to the last

* Catech. Rom. pars 1. cap. 1. Q. 2.

† Optatus, L. 3. edit. Paris. 1631. [p. 68. Lut. Par. 1702.]

‡ L. 2. de Trinitate. [vol. 2. p. 25. Veron. 1730.]

§ L. 12. de Trin. [Ibid. 444.]

breath ; that what I professed in the symbol of my regeneration, being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I may always obtain, *viz.* I may adore thee our Father, and thy Son, together with thee ; and do honour to thy Holy Spirit, who is of thee by thine only begotten. For he is a sufficient witness to faith, who said, Father, all mine are thine, and thine are mine, my Lord Jesus Christ, who remains in thee, and from thee, and with thee always God ; who is blessed for ever and ever.”

Which I the rather mention, because it serves to illustrate the prudence and charity of St. Austin, and the rest of the Christian bishops of those days, who though they looked upon the Donatists as heretics (in denying the Church to be catholic, by confining it to themselves), yet distinguished them from such heretics as erred in the prime and most fundamental truths of our religion ; about the divinity, and the incarnation of our Christ, and such like. That is, they made a difference even in the articles of faith, and looked upon some as more fundamental than others ; being of more importance, and of greater weight and moment ; and therefore judged more mildly of them, than they did of such as denied the holy Trinity ; or held any doctrines which impeached the glory of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost. And therefore they still called these Donatists, brethren ; they pitied them as men seduced by their guides, and professed sincere love and affection to them, whether they accepted it or no. Though such was the peevishness of that sect, that they abused this charity of good catholic Christians towards them ; just as they of the Church of Rome do our charity now. For from thence they took occasion to argue that they were in the right, even by the concessions of their adversaries : which justified both them and their heretical schism. “ For you,” said they, * “ can find no faults in our baptism, nor consequently in our faith, into which we baptize ; for if you could, you would baptize those over again who come from us to you, as we baptize those again who come from you to us.” Which is as much as to say, you allow there is a Church and salvation among us, but we allow no Church, no salvation among you ; therefore it is safest for all to join with us, not with you.

Which is the very charm whereby they of the Church of

* August. L. 2. contra lit. Petiliani. cap. ult. [vol. 12. p. 377. Bassan. 1797.]

Rome endeavour now to work upon the spirits of simple people among us ; though no wiser, than this argument of a company of mad men would be, if they had so much cunning remaining, as to say to us, we deny you to be men, but you allow us to be men, therefore we are fit for all men's society, not you, who are but a herd of beasts.' And what St. Austin answers to the Donatists, is a full answer to the present Romanists ; which is this, in short* (for it is besides my business, to do more than mention these things), "when we speak favourably of you, it is for the sake of what you have of ours, not for what you have of your own ; let that which you have of ours be set aside, and we approve of nothing at all among you."

But I will not further enlarge upon this, nor say much of the next ; which is very plain.

They, therefore, who condemn those as heretics who excommunicate them, and pronounce anathemas against them that believe the whole catholic faith ; are the great disturbers of the Christian world, and the true cause of the divisions and breaches that are in the body of Christ. And who they are that do thus, is visible to every eye ; the Church of Rome having thought fit not to rest satisfied with the simplicity of those often mentioned catholic fundamental truths, which are without controversy and unquestionable ; but, as if that faith which the old Christians thought complete they take to be defective, have adjoined as many more new articles to the old body ; and that under the pain of damnation, if we do not believe them.

I have told you what they are, and if you look them over again, you will find that upon those have all the contests risen between us and them. The necessary fundamental truths, which constitute the Church (which was built upon no other for many ages), are on both sides unquestioned : but because we question, or rather deny those which they would impose, which we are certain are no part of the Christian doctrine, they call us heretics. That is, because we will not yield obedience to their usurped authority, because we cannot believe their new inventions to be catholic and fundamental doctrines. Here is the true reason of all the miserable ruptures that are

* L. 1. de Baptismo contra Donatistas, c. 10. [Ibid. 113.]

in this part of the world ; nay, this is the just grievance and complaint of all Christians (who know any thing of these matters) but themselves alone.

6.

And their guilt is herein the greater, because the best learned among themselves have confessed these additions to the Creed to be doubtful opinions ; unnecessary and superfluous doctrines ; novelties unknown to the ancient Church. Concerning every one of which (three things) our authors have given the clearest evidence.

1. The first of them (the doubtfulness of those doctrines) appears in this, that there is not only variety but contrariety of judgment about them, in their own Church ; which argues plainly great perplexity and uncertainty. Of which there needs no other proof (as Doctor Porter* observes) but the famous books of Bellarmine ; who, in the entrance upon every question there stated, gives an account of the contentions and contradictions of those who have written upon it among themselves. And at this day they are not better agreed in the explication of several points in difference between us ; particularly about the † worship given to images, and the invocation of saints ; which some of their greatest doctors mollify and sweeten (as they do other points) into downright heresy, as such explications are accounted by others.

2. The very same may be clearly shewn out of their own authors, and hath been demonstrated by our divines concerning the second thing, that those doctrines are not necessary, but superfluous. For the Roman Catechism‡ itself having observed, that their ancestors had most wisely distributed all that belongs to saving doctrine, into these four heads (for the help of the people's understanding and memory), the Apostles' Creed, the Sacraments, the Decalogue, and the Lord's Prayer ; immediately confesseth, concerning the first, "that all things which are to be held by the discipline of the Christian faith, whether they have respect to the knowledge of God, or to the creation and government of the world, or to the redemption of mankind, or belong to the rewards of the good, and the punishments of the bad, are contained in the doctrine of the Creed."

* Answer to Charity mistaken, p. 69.

† See the late Answer to the Bishop of Meaux's Exposition of Faith.

‡ Præfat. Sect. 12.

From whence this question naturally arises, how come so many new articles to be made necessary, if all things belonging to the Christian faith be contained in the Apostles' Creed? I can see no reason for it, but only to maintain the grandeur of the Roman Church: for there is no more simply necessary for all to be believed (as Bellarmine himself confesses)* but the articles of that Creed; and therefore the rest are superfluous; and ought to be discarded, as not so needful but that men may be saved without them.

3. And for the third, that they are mere novelties, unknown to those in old time, there are the like concessions of ingenuous men amongst them. *Æneas Sylvius*, afterwards Pope Pius II., confesses,† that “before the time of the Council of Nice, little regard was had to the Roman Church.” Which is a plain contradiction to Pope Pius IV.'s article of new belief, that she is the “mother and mistress of all Churches;” for none can doubt but they understood their duty in those days, and practised it also, to their betters, especially to a parent.

The same may be said of the doctrine of transubstantiation, which some schoolmen have said not to be very ancient, among which are *Scotus* and *Gabriel Biel*. They are the words of *Suarez*,‡ unto whom many other testimonies may be added of the Doctors of that Church, particularly *Alphonsus à Castro*, who saith, the “ancient writers spake very seldom of transubstantiation;” he should have said, not at all, for *Cassander* honestly acknowledges it to be a novelty.§

The like is acknowledged of the sacrifice of the mass, which neither *Thomas Aquinas*, nor *Gabriel Biel*, long after him, believed to be proper, or propitiatory; but give the same account that we do, why the celebration of this sacrament is called a sacrifice of Christ, viz. because “the images of things are called by the names of the things which they represent, (for which *St. Austin* is quoted,) and because by this sacrament we are made partakers of the benefits of Christ's passion.”||

That purgatory was for a good while unknown, and “but

* L. 4. de Verbo Dei, c. 11. [vol. 1. p. 123. col. 2. Prag. 1721.]

† Epist. 288.

‡ Disput. tom. 3. Disp. 30.

§ See a late Treatise of Transubstantiation, by an author of the Roman Communion, Part 1.

|| Summæ Par. 3. Q. 83. Artic. 1. Respond. [vol. 24. p. 450. col. 2. Venet. 1787.]

lately known to the whole Church," is confessed by our Bishop Fisher ;* who, by the whole Church, means only the Latin Church ; for in the same place he saith, "To this day it is not believed by the Greeks." The same he saith of indulgences, which began with men's fears of purgatory.

The same I might observe of the seven sacraments, and the rest of their articles ; but I will only observe the contradiction to which they swear in the very first new article, wherein they declare, that they embrace "apostolical and ecclesiastical traditions," and yet consent at the same time (by swearing to all that is decreed in the Council of Trent) to administer the holy communion but in one kind, which for a thousand years and more (in some places for 1300 years) was administered in both kinds every where, even in the Roman Church, by an undoubted apostolical tradition, and ecclesiastical custom and practice, which continues in all other Churches to this day.

Which observation evidently convinces them to be guilty of the most fearful sin, in cursing and damning those who do not receive these novel doctrines, though they faithfully embrace all the doctrines of the truly catholic faith, and had rather die than deny any part thereof.

But let us be of good comfort ; we are safe enough, notwithstanding all these anathemas which they thunder out against us : for I have proved, that were these doctrines true, as they are certainly false, which they press upon us, yet we should not be heretics, if we did not believe them ; and so not fall, upon this account, under the sentence of damnation. Because it is only the denial of the great and fundamental truths, that can make us incur such a danger ; other truths there are of which we may be ignorant, without danger of perishing, provided we still hold the foundation, and "keep the faith," as the Apostle speaks, with a life according to it.

They themselves, therefore, knew that these terrible anathemas are but bugbear words, which they use to affright children withal : for they who can read what the wisest and best of them write, will find that they confess these new articles to be superfluous, while they plainly say, the Apostles' Creed contains all things necessary to salvation.

Thus Gregory of Valentia :† "The articles of faith contained in the Creed, are as it were the first principles of Christian

* Roff. contra Luth. Art. 18. [p. 496. Wirceb. 1697.]

† In secunda secundæ Disp. 2. Q. 7.

faith—in which are comprised the sum of evangelical doctrine, which all are bound explicitly to believe.—Thus the Fathers judge, when they affirm this Creed was composed by the Apostles, that all might have a short summary of those things which are to be believed, and are scatteredly contained in the Scriptures.” Thus also writes Filiucius, and a great many more; even the Trent Catechism itself, as I have shewn before. So that we have nothing to do, but to hold fast that which we have been taught from the beginning, and to make it the rule of our lives, as well as of our faith.

And that now I must tell you, for a conclusion of this part of my discourse, is the grand truth of all, the main point of the Christian belief, that the intention of all divine truths, and of faith itself, is to make us truly godly. They can do us no service, if they do not produce this effect.

Whence it is that in this very Epistle of St. Paul, he calls Christianity “the doctrine which is according to godliness,” 1 Tim. vi. 3; and a little after, calls it “godliness,” ver. 6. “But godliness,” that is the Christian religion, “with contentment is great gain.” And indeed we may well be contented with the Christian faith and hope, and think ourselves happy in such glorious expectations hereafter: nay, look upon ourselves as exceeding great gainers, whatsoever we lose here upon this account, if we lose not the hope of immortal life.

In the Epistle to Titus also, in the very first verse, he calls it “the truth which is after godliness;” which is the very truth that is the subject of my discourse, as appears by what follows, when the Apostle saith, it is “a mystery of godliness.” Not a cunning device to get money, to advance our worldly grandeur and pomp, much less a crafty artifice to excuse us from living well, or to palliate wickedness, and to shew us a way how to be saved, though we live ungodly (which is the great drift of too many doctrines wherewith the world is troubled), but a wonderful contrivance of the wisdom of heaven, effectually to root out all impiety, to plant all manner of virtue in our hearts, and to take all kind of excuse from us if we do not become truly good.

Whence it is that the Apostle describes Christian women, in his first Epistle to Timothy, ii. 10, by this character, that “they profess godliness.” “Let them be adorned,” saith he, “as becometh women professing godliness, with good works.” Not merely professing the “truth,” or the “faith,” but “godliness,”

which comprehends all Christian virtues: though if he had said, professing the truth, it had been of the same import, because "that truth is godliness."

Hence all the truths I have mentioned, are called *fundamental*; not because the Church is built upon them, but because they are the foundation of all Christian practice, which ought to be superstructed upon them. And therefore let us neither be ignorant of this, nor let our knowledge of it be empty and idle, without effect. That is,

First, Let us not be so foolish as to imagine we shall obtain salvation merely by being of a right belief, and holding the right faith. Which is not an unnecessary caution; for this seems to be the very business of a great many men in the world, to put men in hope of life eternal; if they do but quit that which they call heresy, and embrace the faith that they propound unto them, though their hearts and lives remain just as they were before, without any real amendment. This is certainly not a "mystery of godliness," but a very "mystery of iniquity:" not the wisdom of God, but the witchcraft of the flesh, the world, and the devil, to lead them securely into destruction.

But "we have not so learned Christ," as the same Apostle speaks elsewhere (Eph. iv. 20, 21), "if so be we have heard, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that we put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and that we be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness, and holiness of truth." Mark here what the "truth" is, "as it is in Jesus," (that we may not be deceived by our own or others lusts,) that is, in the Christian religion; it is that which teaches us to abandon all wickedness, and not to think of throwing a covering over it to hide it, but to put it off; that which renews us in the very spirit of our minds, which makes us new creatures, and really restores the divine image in us, in righteousness and sincere holiness.

Thus we have learned Christ, thus we are constantly taught in this Church: and therefore,

Secondly, If the truth hath not this effect upon us, in vain do we pride ourselves in the name of orthodox believers. Upon such St. John hath passed this censure, 1 John i. 6: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." Where you may observe, by the

way, there is a "doing of the truth" expected from us, and not merely believing it.

It was expected from the very heathens, proportionable to what they knew; for they were accused by St. Paul upon this score, that "they held the truth of God in unrighteousness," Rom. i. 18. Some truth they knew, and it taught them to do better than they did: and their not doing so, was their condemnation. And if natural truth taught them righteousness of life, much more doth this Divine revelation which God hath made in Christ Jesus, instruct us therein; and if they were found guilty for holding that truth in unrighteousness, much more shall we be found so for holding in the like wickedness, these supernatural truths; which we know only by a special grace of God; which hath revealed them unto us for this very purpose, to "teach us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world," Tit. ii. 12.

Which if we do not, mark the consequence; either we shall not "hold the truth," or if we do, the truth will not save us, but only serve to condemn us.

Sometimes by living wickedly, men lose the very truth, either in whole, or in part; as the heathen, St. Paul there shews, did, Rom. i. 21, 22, 23. Read the words, and you will not wonder if the same sad fate attend men's impiety now, which the truths of the Gospel so directly oppose; that if they cannot prevail with men to leave their wickedness, their wickedness will prevail with them to leave the truth.

This belief, for instance, that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who died for us, and rose again, will come to judge us (which is the sum of Christianity), is so manifestly against those sins which men commit against his laws, that, if they be persuaded they shall be judged according to his Gospel, it must needs make them very uneasy in their sins. Which therefore, if they will not quit, their sins will tempt them to be rid of this belief; which disquiets and disturbs them in the enjoyment of those lusts, on which they have set their hearts.

Or if it have not this effect, to make them wholly disbelieve the life and judgment to come; yet it tempts them to adulterate the Christian faith (as too many Christians have done), and to devise easier terms of happiness than the Gospel propounds; inventing such a religion as will favour them in their sins, and comply with their inclinations to follow their foul lusts, and

yet not perish eternally. And it is not hard to shew, if this were a proper place for it, that abundance of false notions, if not all, which men have about faith, have sprung from this cause.

But suppose men do still hold the truth, though in unrighteousness, what will they get by it? since it will not save them, but only serve to condemn them. For this is a part of the evangelical truth, as you read in the place now named (Rom. i. 18), that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." And again, we read in the next chapter, of "the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious (or will not yield to evident convictions), and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil," &c. ii. 6, 7, 8, &c.

Where you see there is an "obedience to the truth" expected from us; unto which, if we will not submit, but "obey unrighteousness," then that very truth tells us, we must expect nothing but the inexpressible displeasure of the Almighty, against every such refractory opposer of the truth, which he should obey. There is no exception from this rule; for (as it there follows, ver. 11.) "there is no respect of persons with God."

Would to God they would seriously lay this to heart, who now seem to be possessed with a mighty zeal for truth, and for a right faith; that they be not so deceived by this warm zeal as to miss the "end of faith, the salvation of their souls;" which can by no means be obtained, no not by faith itself, without an holy life.

PART II.

WHAT IT IS TO BE A PILLAR AND GROUND OF TRUTH ; AND
TO WHOM THIS OFFICE BELONGS.

HAVING shewn with some care what the truth is, of which St. Paul speaks (which was the first thing I propounded), the two next may be explained together with less pains, *viz.* what, and who, is the pillar and ground of these great truths, which are necessary to be believed by all that will be saved.

I. And as for the first of these, they of the Church of Rome would have us, by a "pillar and ground," to understand that which is the very foundation of our faith ; that upon whose credit and authority all Christian truth, and the certainty of our religion depends. For taking it for granted that the Church is this pillar, and presuming also that they only are the Church, they thence infer that we can be sure of no truth, but from them ; and that they give authority and certainty to the very Word of God itself ; and likewise, whatsoever the Church, *i.e.* they declare to be truth, is therefore to be received ; insomuch, that if they make any new articles of faith, we are to give a full assent to them ; because all truth depends upon the credit of their Church. This sounds strangely in the ears of those that are not accustomed to such language ; and may be thought, perhaps, a misrepresentation of their doctrine. But Bellarmine (to name no more) vouches this to be the Catholic sense of this place : and from the words "pillar and ground of truth," proves that "the Church cannot err, either in believing or in teaching :"* and again, that "whatsoever the Church approves is true, and whatsoever it disapproves, is false."†

But this only shews that they are hard put to it, to find proofs for their high pretences. For it will appear, in the process of this discourse, first, that it can never be proved,

* L. 2. de Concil. Autor. c. 2. [vol. 2. p. 33. col. 1. Prag. 1721.]

† L. 3. de Eccles. Milit. c. 14. [Ibid. p. 88. col. 2.]

that the words "pillar and ground," have respect to the Church, and not rather to Timothy ; for which there is good authority as well as reason. I shall let the authority alone, till its proper place, and only note, secondly, that there is good reason not to refer this to the Church ; for having called the Church a house, it doth not seem a congruous speech, immediately to call the same Church a pillar ; as on the other side, it is very agreeable to call Timothy a pillar in that house ; and to wish him to behave himself therein, like other great persons, to whom, in other places, he gives the name of pillars. But, thirdly, if it do relate to the Church, it no more concerns the Church of Rome, than any other Church ; and immediately relates to the Church of Ephesus, in which Timothy presided. Which Church of Ephesus,* with other Churches of the East, condemned this headship of the bishop of Rome, upon which they build a sovereignty over our faith. And further, if we should suppose, fourthly, that the Apostle respects the Church universal ; and likewise, that it is not only bound in duty to be, but also actually is, the "pillar and ground of truth ;" yet, lastly, it can never be proved that he speaks of any other truth, but those grand fundamental articles of faith, those catholic doctrines which were once delivered to the saints, and which, blessed be God, are maintained in every Church to this day ; not of all truth whatsoever, much less of an absolute freedom from all manner of error.

For, letting these things alone at present, I shall shew that this is all that can be meant by the "pillar and ground of truth," if it refer to the Church (as I am content to admit), not that the Church (as they absurdly affirm) is the very foundation of our faith, upon which it relies ; but that it firmly retains, upholds, and professes the Christian truth, against all the force, violence and opposition of earth and hell, of men and devils, that endeavour to overthrow it.

That this is the natural import of the phrase, I will manifest, first, from the propriety of the words ; secondly, from clear reason and the holy Scripture. ❀

First, From the propriety of the words in the Greek language. In which *στυλος* frequently signifies such a pillar as stood before their common halls and courts of judicature, upon which the decrees and orders of the court were wont to hang or be fixed. Unto which Tertullian alludes, when speaking of

* Concil. Florent. Scss. ult.

an article of the Creed (in the place above named),* he saith, "*Unum opinor apud omnes* EDICTUM DEI PENDET, I suppose one edict of God hangs up among all," viz. to be read by them; having just asked before, "*quonam titulo Spes ista proscripta est* ; by what TITLE this hope (viz. of the resurrection) is proposed and held forth to all." And the word ἐδραῖωμα ground, signifies not the foundation, but the seat where any thing is placed ; so as to be settled and laid up, to remain and abide there. And, at the most, can mean no more than the stay, or establishment, the seat or settlement of truth : Βεβαίωσις Œcumenius renders it the confirmation of truth ; or if we will have these words allude to a building, because the Church is here called "the house of the living God," as elsewhere the "temple of God" (which is the same), they signify no more but supporters and upholders, without which the edifice would fall to the ground. And the most we can make of them when they are applied to the Church, with respect to the truth, is this, that the Church sustains and keeps it from sinking or falling, as a pillar firmly settled upon a basis, sustains and upholds the fabric laid upon it. This consists in these three things, which I shall distinctly, though but briefly, mention, for the reader's clear information in this matter.

First, The Church is that body of men which preserves and keeps, which maintains and holds up the Christian faith, which God hath committed to its care, as he did to the Jews the Divine oracles, delivered in old times. And as the Church will answer it to God, and not be guilty of betraying its trust, it must constantly preserve the truth committed to it ; that it be not lost and do not perish. This might be divided into two, that the Church is the keeper and conservator of all the Holy Scriptures, and the Divine truths contained therein ; and that by faithful keeping them it upholds and supports the truth, as a pillar doth the building which rests upon it. But this is sufficiently included in what follows.

Secondly, The Church is not only to preserve the truth, but to profess it and to give attestation to it, that is, to bear witness that this is the truth of God, and this alone, which he hath revealed for the salvation of mankind. By which means it doth not only hold up the truth, but hold it out to others, as the sacred edict or decree of God ; which all are to take notice of and observe. And so,

* L. de Resurrect. Carnis, c. 18. [p. 335. Par. 1695.]

Thirdly, It is by this means to promote and propagate the truth, and not let it fall to the ground, as a building doth when the pillars that supported it are removed.

In brief : as heretical Churches were the pillars and stays of falsehood, they maintained and defended it, they testified to it, and endeavoured to continue it, and leave it to posterity : just so is the Church of Christ the pillar and ground of truth ; it professes the Christian faith, it maintains it as the truth of God, and notwithstanding all the persecutions, troubles, losses, torments, whereby its enemies would shake the constancy of those who maintain the truth, they testify to it, and declare to future generations that this, as St. Peter speaks, "is the true grace of God, wherein we stand."

This is the first consideration, to assure us of the true meaning of these words.

The second is as strong ; for plain reason makes it evident that this, not the other, is the sense of them. The Church that is cannot be the very foundation upon which the truth is built, not that which gives it authority, and makes it to be truth ; for the quite contrary is declared by truth itself ; that the truth is the foundation upon which the Church is built, and which makes it to be a Church. So St. Paul instructs this very Church of Ephesus, who were "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord : in whom ye also are builded together, for an habitation of God through the Spirit," Ephes. ii. 20, 21, 22. It was therefore a Church of Christ, because it held the truth which he and his Apostles taught. And so a great number of the ancient Fathers expound those words of Christ to St. Peter, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock," i. e. upon the confession of faith which thou hast made, upon that truth thou hast confessed, "I will build my Church," Matth. xvi.

We can own no society of men to be a Church of Christ, unless they profess the true faith of Christ. And therefore the true faith must be known before we can know whether they be a true Church or no, who call themselves by that name ; and consequently, they do not give authority to the truth, but the truth to them, because the truth must be supposed before they can have any authority.

Observe the above recited words, I beseech you, which say the Church is built upon "the foundation of the Apostles and

Prophets," &c. i. e. upon the truth revealed by them in the Gospel. It is a Church by holding and believing this, for if this be not the thing which makes a company of men to be "a Church of the living God," tell me why the Mahometans are not his Church? They are a society of men professing some belief, and having some truth and devotion, and being governed by laws as well as we. There is no reason why they belong not to the Church of Christ, but because they have not "the truth as it is in Christ." Therefore the Church does not make the truth, but the truth makes the Church: the truth doth not rely upon the Church, because it is before the Church which relies upon it.

Which was the doctrine of the Church itself in after ages, as it were easy to shew, if I intended to write a great book. I will content myself with two testimonies in ancient times; the one is of St. Chrysostom, who thus expounds these very words, "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." Not like that Judaical temple (saith he), for this is it which keeps together and contains the faith and the preaching (or doctrine), ἡ γὰρ ἀλήθεια ἐστὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ στύλος καὶ ἐδραίωμα. "For the truth is both the pillar and the ground, or foundation of the Church:" the other is St. Austin, in his third Book upon the Creed, to the Catechumens,* which begins thus: "You know this (*viz.* the Creed) to be the foundation of the catholic faith, upon which the edifice of the Church arose, being built by the hands of the Apostles and Prophets." And with this of Gabriel Biel in latter ages,† "Catholic truths, without any approbation of the Church, are in the nature of the thing immutable, and immutably true; and so are to be accounted unchangeably catholic." Which brings to mind another remarkable saying of St. Austin, who, after he had produced in his first and second books against Julian the Pelagian, the testimonies of eleven great doctors, *viz.* Irenæus, Cyprian, Rheticus, Olympius, Hilarius, Ambrosius, Innocentius (where, by the way, it is observable, he mentions the Bishop of Rome only as one of the eminent bishops, not as head of them all), Gregory Nyssen, Basil of Cæsarea, John Chrysostom, Jerome, makes this reflection upon their consent (which he looked upon as the voice of the catholic Church), "*Qui tamen veritati auctoritatem non suo tribuere consensu,*

* Tom. 9. [vol. 6. p. 568. Par. 1685.]

† L. 3. in Sentent. Dist. 25. Dub. 3.

&c. who, notwithstanding, did not give authority to the truth by their consent, but received testimony and glory by partaking of the truth."

They endeavour, indeed, to put by such evident conviction as this, by a little distinction; that though in itself the Church is built upon the truth, yet in respect to us the truth is built upon the Church, which appears already to be a vain conceit, unto those who consider that the Church cannot be the foundation of truth to us, unless we first know it to be the true Church of Christ, and endued with this privilege from God to be "the ground of truth;" in this sense which I am now confuting. But whence should we know this? If it be said from the truth which it professes, then the Church is not the foundation of the truth to us, for we must know the truth before we can know that to be the true Church which calls itself the foundation. If we say from the Church, then the Church is the pillar and ground of itself; and we believe it to be the true Church, because it says it is. Which is so absurd and dangerous, that the Mahometans, as I said, will be as true a Church as any else; they may boldly put in for their share of this privilege: nay, if confidence and power can carry it, engross it wholly to themselves.

It remains, therefore, that this is the true sense of the words which I have given. The Church keeps the truth, and keeps it up: it is the conservator of it, and preserves it from falling to the ground; it proclaims it, and holds it forth to others: it continues the truth in the world, and settles it in men's minds: but itself is built upon this truth, not the truth upon it. Which derives its authority from God, who sent Jesus Christ into the world to teach us his will, and gave him power to send his Apostles, as he had sent him: "God bearing them witness, with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

This will be the more plainly laid open, if I spend a little time in shewing what is here meant by the Church, which is commonly thought to be "the pillar and ground of truth," and was the third thing propounded in the beginning to be explained.

III.

II. The *Church*, or *House of God*, signifies every where a company of Christians united under their pastors, unto Christ their Head by a sincere faith; and joined one to another by brotherly love and communion. Wherever we find such a society of men

and women, there is a Church ; and all the societies of this kind throughout the world make up that which we call the catholic, or universal Church, the whole body of Christ, or Christian Church. Of which the Church of Ephesus here spoken of was a part : one eminent company of Christians professing the truly catholic faith, and joined to Timothy as their chief pastor, for the worship and service of Christ, and for to be the pillar and ground of truth, as these words must be interpreted, if they relate unto the Church.

They indeed, who are now of the Roman communion, understand by the Church, only the pastors of the Church. And some of them, this Church representative, as it may be called ; that is, the whole assembly of Christian bishops, as many as can meet together, representing all the Churches under their care. But others understand only one bishop alone, the Pope of Rome ; who is then the Church virtual, in whom all the power of all the bishops in the world is united. But as there are no such notions of the word Church in Scripture ; so, if they be applied to this place, they will appear very wild fancies, unto any man who will soberly consider the scope of it. For it is very evident, that the Church is here mentioned as distinct from Timothy, who was the prime pastor of it, and who is directed how to behave himself in it. Therefore if this Church was the pillar of truth, the whole multitude of believers at Ephesus, united under him and the rest of their pastors, must be looked upon as having an interest in this great privilege and honour, as well as duty, to be the conservators and supporters of the Christian faith, which they had received. For St. Paul, as I said, is instructing Timothy how to demean himself in this society, which he calls the house or family of God ; that is, among true believers in Christ, formed into a society under the government of their guides ; who were to take the greater care, that every one in the Church was well taught, instructed and ordered, because they were the pillar and ground of truth.

This made St. Paul very solicitous, that Timothy should carry himself well, and be a good pastor in that Church, of which the Holy Ghost had made him chief overseer. And not knowing when he might have opportunity to see him, and give him personal instruction by word of mouth, he wrote this letter to him for his direction ; that he might fully understand how to discharge this office. And therefore these words, it appears by the verse foregoing (ch. iii. 14, 15, 16), relate partly

to what went before, and partly to what follows. "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly ; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth. And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness," &c. Which whole paragraph is to be understood, as if he had said, in more words : "Though I hope shortly to discourse with thee face to face, yet not knowing what may hinder and retard my hopes, I have sent the above-written instructions to thee ; not to trouble the Church with vain disputations, about the rites of the law, and such idle questions as the Jews are apt to raise ; but, to remember (as I have said in the beginning of this letter, ver. 4, 5, of the first chapter) that the end of the commandment is charity, the love of God and of our neighbour. This therefore teach them ; and instruct them also to make prayers, supplications and intercession, with giving of thanks, for all men ; for kings, and all that are in authority (chap. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4), teach them all likewise how to pray (ver. 8), and instruct the bishops and the deacons, and all the rest in their office and duty ; for it is of great concernment, that they be well informed ; because this Church, over which thou art set, is the very seat of truth, which is not to be found in any other place, but in such a company of believers. Who ought to uphold and defend it, when thou art dead and gone ; and therefore had need be well settled and established in it ; especially in the great mystery of godliness, wherein all Christians agree, and about which there is no controversy. That so the Church may never let it go, and this truth may not die and fall to the ground, when we are laid in our graves ; but be delivered to those that come after, as the very oracles of God."

Who now is there so blind, as not to be able to see, that by the Church is meant, not merely the supreme governor of the Church, which was Timothy ; but all that company of Christian people, under their several bishops and teachers, who belonged to Ephesus. All of which St. Paul left Timothy, when he himself went into Macedonia, to take care of, and to charge that they taught no other doctrine (as you read, i. 3), and in this house, or family he was, when St. Paul wrote this Epistle to him ; not in a General Council, for there was none in three hundred years after this time. Therefore he doth not speak of the Church representative, as it is called ; much less of the

Church virtual, as they term it ; that is, the Pope. For then, mark what sense the words will make ; “ I have wrote to thee (not knowing when I shall see thee) how to behave thyself in the Bishop of Rome :” as if he would have us fancy Timothy in the Pope’s belly ; and himself gravely instructing him, how to carry himself with great circumspection and discretion there.

I do not love to use such words ; but there are no other I can find so apt, to represent the gross absurdity of their doctrines, who take upon them to give infallible interpretations of holy Scripture, from the universal Bishop, the grand and only oracle of Christendom, as they would have him esteemed : or from such Councils as they are pleased to call General, and can obtain their approbation. You see what goodly ones we are like to have, if we give up our faith to them ; how they will pervert the plain words of God, to serve their own interest ; and wrest them from their natural and easy sense, to another which is so forced, that there is no man so rude but would readily discern the absurdness of it, if he were permitted to read, and did consider the holy Scriptures. For their great Cardinal Bellarmine alleges these very words, to prove that General Councils, confirmed by the Pope, cannot err : * nay, that particular Councils, approved by the Pope, have the same privilege : † where it is evident to the weakest understanding, that the whole company of Christians, that at Ephesus united to their pastors (without which they could not be a society or company), are the Church here spoken of : and therefore are the pillar and ground of truth (if this relate to the Church), and not merely some particular person in that Church ; much less a General Council of all the bishops in the world ; and least of all, one bishop ; in whom Timothy could not be said, in any sense, to be ; as he is here said to be in that Church, which is the pillar and ground of truth, *viz.* in that Church whereof he was the chief governor ; which was the pillar and ground of truth in that part of the world. For this is not an office appropriated to any particular Church, but belonging to the catholic Church, and to every single Church, as it is a member of the whole.

And here it will be very profitable, I think, to note these six things, for the full explication of this place of Scripture.

* Lib. 2. de Concil. Auctoritate C. 2. Class. 2da. [vol. 2. p. 33. col. 1. Prag. 1721.]

† Ib. cap. 6. [p. 37. col. 1.] Denique.

1. The first of them is that which I now mentioned ; that every particular Church, one as well and as much as another, is a pillar and ground of truth, in that sense which I have declared. This is not a prerogative which belongs to some one Church ; but a privilege appertaining to the universal, and to every particular as a part of it. For if the Church at Ephesus was a pillar of truth, as St. Paul here affirms ; then by the same reason, the Church of Antioch, the Church of Corinth, the Church of Rome, and the Church of Jerusalem, had the same authority. For that which made any one of them a Church, made the other so, *viz.* the true faith of Christ there professed, and union with their pastors, for the divine service ; and therefore that honour or office, which belonged to one of them, must of necessity belong to another ; because they were but so many members of one, and the same body. That is, every one of them, in their several countries, wherein they were planted, had the truth of God committed to them ; which they were to maintain and support unto the very death ; and endeavour that every one, who was a stranger to the words of eternal life, might by their means know and believe them.

And accordingly every Church hath contributed unto this, and no one Church could ever with any reason pretend to be the sole supporter or defender of the Christian truth. Of which there is this plain demonstration, that then the Church is most of all the pillar and ground, or buttress, as some translate it, of truth, when it is assaulted by heresies ; and not only beats them off, but beats them down and suppresses them. Now all heresies were not quashed and confounded by St. Peter and his successors in the Church of Rome ; but by other Apostles and Evangelists, and their successors in other Churches. This is demonstrated by a learned man of the Roman communion,* by twelve famous instances, out of a far greater number. St. John for example, not Peter, or any of his successors, struck down the Nicolaitans, St. Paul the Nazarens and Cerinthians, St. Luke the Ebionites, as he proves out of good authors, particularly Hyginus ; who relates how the bishops of other sees (not the bishops of Rome) quashed the Ptolemaites, the Noetians, and divers other heretics, as the Synod of Antioch did. Paulus Samosatenus† and the first

* Joh. Launoi Epist. pars Quinta Antonio Varillao, p. 35, &c.

† Euseb. L. 7. Eccles. Hist. c. 22. [c. 27, &c. p. 277, &c. Par. 1659.]

General Council of Constantinople (where Damasus bishop of Rome was not present, either by himself or his legates), did Eunomius and other heretics. Which leads to the second thing I would have observed.

2. That every eminent pastor in the Church, who laboured in the word and doctrine, as St. Paul speaks in this Epistle, v. 17, had these very titles anciently bestowed upon him, of the pillar and ground of truth, because the bishops were the principal trustees with whom the faith was deposited (as may be observed in the words of Irenæus before mentioned, and many other ancient writers, and in St. Paul's words to Timothy, when he bids him to keep the *depositum* he had committed to him, and commit the same to other faithful or trusty persons, who should be able to teach it to others, 2 Tim. i. 14. ii. 2), and because they were principal instruments in defending the truth against opposers; in propagating the Christian faith to those who were ignorant of it; and in preserving the rest of the Church in the belief of the truth, which they had entertained, by their constant instructions, and zealous exhortation, to hold fast what they had received.

Nay, we shall rarely, if at all, find any bishop of Rome, called the "pillar and ground of truth," but several other bishops are frequently called by this name. St. Basil, for instance,* writing of the Bishop of Neocæsarea, newly dead, bewails his loss very much, because "he was ἐκκλησιῶν κόσμος, the ornament of the Churches, στύλος καὶ ἑδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας (the very words of the Apostle here in this place) the pillar and ground of truth; στερέωμα τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν πίστεως, a strong and firm establishment of faith in Christ," &c. And upon the same occasion writing to the Church of Ancyra,† whose bishop was called Athanasius (it appears by some of the foregoing epistles), he saith, πέπτωκεν ἀνὴρ, στύλος τῷ ὄντι καὶ ἑδραίωμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, "a man is fallen, who was indeed a pillar and ground of the Church." And complaining in another epistle,‡ of the miserable estate of their Churches, he says, among other things, οἱ στύλοι καὶ ἑδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας ἐν διασπορᾷ, "the pillars and ground of the truth are dispersed;" the bishops, he means, were banished from their flocks. Which he bewails in another place in the very same language, only putting both the foregoing parts of their character toge-

* Epist. 62. tom. 2. [vol. 3. p. 151. Par. 1839.]

† Epist. 67. [Ibid. p. 155.]

‡ Epist. 70. [Ibid. p. 542.]

ther, οὗς ἐγὼ στύλους καὶ ἐδραῖωμα,* &c. "whom I account the pillars and ground, both of the truth and of the Church; and honour them so much the more, the further off they are banished from their Churches, and account that separation the greatest punishment."

In the very same language St. Gregory Nazianzen addresses himself to St. Basil,† whom he calls, στύλον καὶ ἐδραῖωμα τῆς ἐκκλησίας, πίστεως ἔρεισμα, καὶ πνεύματος καταγώγιον, "the pillar and ground of the Church, the prop of faith, the habitation of the Spirit." And so he calls Athanasius, στύλος τῆς ἐκκλησίας,‡ "the pillar of the Church:" and in another place,§ τὸ τῆς πίστεως ἔρεισμα, "the prop, or stay of the faith." And writing to Eusebius, bishop of Samosata,|| he thus begins, "What shall I call thee? στύλον καὶ ἐδραῖωμα, &c. Shall I call thee the pillar and ground of the Church, or a light in the world, &c. or the stay of thy country, or the rule of faith, or ambassador of the truth, or all these together, and more than all these?"

But that which is most worthy to be noted under this head is, that St. Gregory Nyssen,¶ expounds this very text of Timothy, and makes him, not the Church, "the pillar and ground of truth." For discoursing concerning the ministers of the divine mysteries, as pillars of the house of God, he saith, τὸν Τιμόθεον καλὸν στύλον, &c. St. Paul wrought and fashioned "Timothy to be a goodly pillar, making him (as he speaks, with his own voice) στύλον καὶ ἐδραῖωμα τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ ἀληθείας, the pillar and ground of the Church, and of truth." As if he took the sense of these words to be this, "But if I tarry long, that thou, who art the pillar and ground of truth, mayest know how to behave thyself in the Church," &c. And indeed, the Apostles are called στύλοι, pillars, in Gal. ii. 9, not only St. Peter, but James and John also. And here we are taught, as he truly observes, "that not only Peter, James and John were pillars, not only John the Baptist was a burning lamp; ἀλλὰ πάντες οἱ δι' ἑαυτῶν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἐρείδοντες, but all that by themselves support the Church, all that by their work are shining lights, are called both pillars and lamps."

Which names were afterward applied to Christian bishops,

* Epist. 349. [Ibid. p. 467.]

† Orat. 19. beginning. [vol. 1. p. 286. Par. 1630.]

‡ Orat. 21. [Ibid. p. 339.] § Orat. 23. [Ibid. p. 409.]

|| Epist. 29. tom. 1. [Ibid. p. 793.]

¶ De vita Mosis. tom. 1. p. 226. [Par. 1638.]

by the most eminent persons in the Church; who hereby plainly declared, what they understood by these words of St. Paul; and that they looked not upon this as a privilege peculiar to any one bishop, or any one Church; but common to all Churches, and especially to the principal persons in the Church, who were the leaders and guides of the rest; and so more peculiarly intrusted with the preservation of Divine truth, and the chief pillars and supporters of the faith. And thus Origen (or whosoever he was that wrote the Homilies upon the Song of Songs),* seems to have understood this place; for having observed from hence that the Church is God's house, and applied these words to the explication of the last verse of the first chapter of the Canticles, where it is said, "The beams of our house are cedar," he concludes, that hereby are meant those who are *validiores*, of greatest strength in the Church: *Et puto quod convenienter hi qui episcopatum bene ministrant in Ecclesia*, &c. "And I think, that they who well discharge the office of a bishop in the Church, may conveniently be called beams, by which the whole building is borne up," &c. *viz.* by supporting and defending the Christian faith, upon which the Church is built. And thus the Abyssinian Christians at this day, call not only St. Mark, but their great doctor St. Cyril, by the name of *Columnæ Ecclesiæ Alexandrinæ*,† "the pillars of the Church of Alexandria;" because Cyril was a mighty asserter and defender of the truth, against the assaults of heretics. Upon which account, Rupertus Tuitiensis‡ calls St. Austin by the same name, that St. Paul here calls Timothy, *columna et firmamentum veritatis*, "the pillar and ground, or strong stay of truth." Which language is common among the Jews, who call Abraham, for instance, "the pillar of the world,"§ with respect to the true religion which he maintained; which is the very language of Ignatius, concerning the Apostles, of whom he thus speaks, *οἱ στύλοι τοῦ κόσμου. οἱ ἀπόστολοι*,|| "the pillars of the world, the Apostles;" mentioning together with them, "the spouse of Christ," *viz.* the Church.

I have been the more copious in this, because it shews that

* Hom. 3. Basil. p. 598.

† Ludolphi Histor. Æthiop. L. 3. c. 12. n. 51.

‡ L. 7. oper. de Sp. Sancto, cap. 19.

§ Maimon. de cultu stell. c. 1. n. 5. et More Nevohim, Pars 3. c. 29.

|| Epist. ad Philadelph.

the ancient doctors thought all bishops to be equally concerned in this office and honour; it never entering into their minds that any one had an interest in it more than the rest; much less that one (the Bishop of Rome) had it solely to himself.

3. But, further, I observe that the martyrs, though not bishops, are frequently called by this name. So the Churches of Vienne and Lyons, in their letter to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia, concerning the blessed martyrs who had suffered among them, say, that God delivered the weaker sort, and opposed to the fury of the enemy, *σύλους ἐδραίους*, those who were "firm and steady pillars, able by their patience to draw all the violent assaults of the devil upon them."* Among whom they mention Sanchis, a deacon, and Maturus, a mere novice, and Attalus, born at Pergamus, *σύλον καὶ ἐδραίωμα τῶν ἐνταῦθα αἰεὶ γεγνονότα* :† who had always "been the pillar and ground (or stay and strength) of Christians in this place;" that is, settled and sustained others in the Christian belief. And so Eusebius speaks of other martyrs at Alexandria, in the time of Decius, *οἱ στεῖργοι καὶ μακίρωι σύλοι τοῦ κύριου*,‡ &c. "firm and blessed pillars of the Lord, who strengthened by him, and having might and power answerable to the strength of their faith, became admirable witnesses of his kingdom." For they could not be shaken with the fear of death and torment; and so by their steadfastness confirmed and established others in the Christian faith; and were eminent instruments likewise of converting strangers to our religion; who saw their pious and meek constancy under the greatest sufferings, joined with the greatest charity, bowels of mercy and compassion towards their bloody persecutors. For whom they begged pardon and forgiveness of God, desiring nothing more than they might come to that heavenly kingdom, which they testified to them; by parting with life itself for the sake of it.

Neither is this merely the ecclesiastical language, but the holy Scripture itself gives those this honourable title; who constantly endured tribulation for the Gospel sake, though it did cost them their lives. Thus our blessed Lord speaks to the Church of Philadelphia (Rev. iii. 12), "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God."

* Apud Euseb. L. 5. Histor. Eccles. cap. 1. p. 155. edit. Vales. [Par. 1659.]

† Ib. p. 157.

‡ L. 6. Eccles. Hist. cap. 41. [Ib. p. 238.]

Which signifies partly, that he should be an eminent instrument of upholding the Church, and preserving many in the profession of Christianity, by his constancy and firmness in it ; and partly, that he should be so established himself by the grace and power of God, that he should never fall (according to that of St. Peter, 1 Epist. v. 10. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you") : and partly that he should be made in the highest sense, a **PILLAR**, that is, an Apostolical man, who should be advanced to the most eminent employment in the Church ; of teaching and instructing, of governing and ruling, as a principal pastor in the temple of God. In one word, be an "angel of the Church" (as he speaks in the beginning of this letter, ver. 7, and in all the rest), and illustrious minister and messenger of God to publish the glad tidings of salvation to the world.

Such the Apostles were ; whom Theodoret calls the "pillars of the truth," with peculiar respect to their sufferings. "Behold," saith he,* "Peter and John, τοὺς πύργους τῆς ἐνσεβείας, τοὺς στύλους τῆς ἀληθείας, &c. the towers or bulwarks of godliness, the pillars of truth, supporting the structure of the Church ; being scourged by the Jews, but rejoicing and glorying (Acts v. 41) that they were counted worthy to suffer shame, or to be disgraced for his name." And such like were these victorious souls, as Arethas† expounds our Saviour's words to this Church ; "For he that conquers," saith he, "the adverse powers, στύλος καὶ ἐδραῖωμα καθίσταται τῆς ἀληθείας, is constituted a pillar and ground of the truth ; rejoicing himself immutably (so he interprets 'in the temple of my God') and establishing others in goodness, that they may not fall from their steadfastness."

4. Any eminent person also in the Church, though not a martyr, is sometimes called by this name in ecclesiastical writers. For instance, Jo. Damascen thus addresses himself to Jordanes the Archimandrite, ὦ πάτερ θειότατε, στύλε καὶ ἐδραῖωμα τῆς ἀληθείας,‡ "O most divine father, the pillar and ground, or stay of truth." Nay, thus zealous persons in the laity, especially if they were of great quality, contributed to the support of the faith, by supporting these pillars of it. So

* Orat. de Providentia, tom. 4. p. 441.

† Comment. in Rev. 3. 12.

‡ Epist. ad eum de Trisagio.

St. Basil, in one of the forenamed epistles, having bewailed the banishment of their bishops, whom he calls the "pillars and ground of truth," prays Terentius (a Count of the Empire) to preserve himself safe, that they might have some to rest upon; "God having graciously made him *ἐν πᾶσιν ἡμῖν βακτηρίαν καὶ ἔρεισμα*,* a support and prop in all things to us." But they of the clergy more particularly, though of the order below bishops, were looked upon as having no small share in this office. For St. Cyril of Alexandria† having mentioned Christ as the foundation, and believers in him as precious stones built upon him, unto a holy temple; compares their instructors in the mysteries of religion to the most precious stones (such as those mentioned Isa. liv. 11, 12.) which God uses, some in laying the foundation, others as buttresses, some for the gates, others for the walls of the holy city, that is, the Church; that "all her children may be taught of God."

5. Nay, one of the forenamed great doctors of the Church warrants me to add, that every pious member of the Church, in his place and calling, hath his share in this great trust. "For whosoever," saith St. Gregory Nyssen,‡ "is perfected in these two great commandments, to love God and to love his neighbour, he is framed to be *σῦλος καὶ ἑδραῖωμα τῆς ἀληθείας*, a pillar and ground of truth, according to the language of the Apostle. By both these, we may become such pillars, as Peter, and James, and John; or if there be any other, since them, that hath been or shall be worthy of this name." And he doth, in effect, say the same in the place before named; § where he observes the Apostle requires others to be pillars, as well as himself, when he saith, *ἑδραῖοι γίνεσθε, ἀμετακίνητοι*, 1 Cor. xv. 58, "be ye stedfast (or stable), unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." For he that is thus firmly "fixed and settled" (as the word *ἑδραῖος* signifies), and diligent in well doing, whatsoever trials he hath to shake him, he supports religion, he maintains the credit of it in the world, he doth great service to the truth, by shewing how good, how useful, how laborious, it makes those that embrace it.

* Epist. 349. [ut supra, p. 467.]

† Lib. 5. in Esaiam. tom. 2. p. 768. [Lutet. 1638.]

‡ Hom. 14. in Cant. Canticorum, p. 684. [Par. 1638.]

§ De vita Mosis. [Ibid. p. 226.]

And I am sure it lies upon every one of us, as an indispensable duty, to hold fast the truth, and to profess it, and practise it; and, notwithstanding any danger or trouble unto which it may expose us, to testify unto it, if need be, by constant, patient, peaceable suffering for Christ's sake. And he that doth thus, is according to his measure, though never so mean a person in the Church, "a pillar and ground of truth." And thus Theodoret expounds these words, he calls *σύλλογον*, "the assembly or congregation of those that believe, the house of God and the Church: and these," he saith, "are the pillar and support of truth. For being founded upon the rock, they both remain unshaken, and preach by their deeds the truth of their doctrine." And Theophylact also, *ἡ δὲ ἐκκλησία τῆς ἀληθείας σύστασις*. "The Church is a constitution, or an assembly of truth: for all things that are done in it, are true, nothing shadowy, as under the law," &c.

6. I have but one thing further to add; that the more and the better they are, who join in this work, the greater support they give to the truth.

First, I say, the more, the greater number there are of those who maintain the truth, by preaching, writing, suffering, or well-doing, and the greater credit they have in the world, the stronger pillars they are, and the surer doth the truth seem to be in the eyes of those to whom they represent it. Upon which account the doctrine of St. Paul and Barnabas, which he had received by revelation, as well as other Apostles, yet being communicated to James and Cephas and John, who were eminent pillars, and had been approved by them, received the more strength by their concurrent testimony, Gal. ii. 2, 5, 9. And it was still more confirmed by the whole council of Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 2, 25), so that it was received joyfully at Antioch (ver. 31), and the Churches in other cities "were established in the faith, and increased in number daily," Acts xvi. 4, 5. For which reason the testimony of a great assembly of bishops, was a greater support for strengthening to the faith than the testimony of single persons. They were the principal trustees, as I observed before, to whose fidelity the truth was committed; and when they met together in a council to discharge this trust, it gave great force to the truth declared by them. Which they knew so well, that in ancient times, such Councils were wont to desire the consent of other bishops, who were not

there, for the greater establishment and confirmation of the faith, as Theodoret* relates of the Council of Sardica, whose letter he hath set down to all the bishops in the world; desiring them, *ὡς τῷ πνεύματι παρόντες*, as present in spirit with them, to consent to their Synod, and by their subscription to decree, that concord might be preserved, among all their fellow bishops every where. Nay, the great and first General Council of Nice itself,† wrote to the Church of Alexandria, and the rest throughout Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis, to give them an account of their decrees. And Constantine also certified all absent bishops, who could not come to the Council, of their proceedings: “that there might be one faith” (as his words are) “and sincere charity, and a concurring religion, or piety preserved among them all.”

It was upon the same score, that sometime they sent particularly to the Bishop of Rome for his concurrence (as the Council of Carthage,‡ and others did in the business of Pelagius), not because they imagined their decrees would be of no force without his consent (that is an ungrounded fancy), but because he was an eminent bishop in the Church of Christ; by whose concurrent testimony the truth would be still more confirmed, and their Churches, would have the greater comfort *de communi participatione unius gratiæ*, “from the common participation of one grace;” by knowing, that is, that they were of the same belief.

The like may be said of the martyrs, who, when they suffered in great numbers, gave the more amazing testimony to the truth, which terrified the devil himself, and staggered their very judges: as St. Basil§ speaks of the forty martyrs, who all together, as if they had but one mouth, cried out, when they were examined, “I am a Christian.” By such resolution as this our religion was not only upheld, but mightily increased: and the more the number of Christians increased, the more was truth spread abroad, till it grew to be the prevailing religion; and the “kingdoms of the world became the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.”

2. But it was not mere numbers that did the business; for their extraordinary piety and purity, in those early days, had

* L. 2. Hist. Eccles. c. 6. [p. 80. Cantab. 1720.]

† Theodoret, L. 1. Eccles. Hist. cap. 8, 9. [Ibid. p. 27, &c. 31, &c.]

‡ August. Epist. 90, 91, 95. [Epist. 175. 181. 177. vol. 2. p. 617. 635. 622. Par. 1673.]

§ Tom. 1. Hom. 20. [Hom. 19. vol. 2. p. 210. Par. 1839.]

the greatest hand in it. Which was the second thing I desired to be noted under this last head, that the better the pastors and the people are, the greater service they do to the truth; and the more prevalent their testimony is, when it appears by their lives, that they have no other interest to serve but that of truth and godliness.

And when all is done, it will be found, that the sanctity of those who assert God's holy truth, their pure and undefiled religion, which keeps them from being "spotted by the world," is that which will be the most powerful to move men's minds, and will make the easiest way for its entertainment in men's hearts. Nothing can give a Church such authority, and make its testimony so credible, as its integrity and sincere devotion; its study of purity in heart and life; its designing clearly the good of souls, and not worldly advantages; its universal charity and kindness, which invites even strangers to attend unto it, and much more its own members.

And therefore I must note for a conclusion of this part of my discourse, that when we speak of the Church, *i. e.* the whole company of believers, and say, that it is "the pillar and ground, or establishment of truth," it is meant principally of those, whose faith brings forth fruit and works by love. These are the main supporters of the Christian religion: who do not merely profess it, but are acted and live by their faith, in all holy obedience to Christ. For they are living stones built upon him the foundation of all; the true living body of Christ, who are animated by his Spirit, and with whom he hath promised to make his abode: and consequently are the only persons, who, to purpose, support and maintain and defend the truth. Which would, in a little time, be suppressed or obscured, depraved or varied, concealed or misinterpreted, if the wicked only had the conduct of it; who are no more to be accounted "pillars of the truth," *i. e.* can no more alone support and uphold it, than a reed, a straw, or a rotten stick, can support a building. This is the ancient doctrine of the Church itself, as appears by what St. Austin says, in his Preface to the Exposition of the 48th [47th] Psalm.* Where taking the firmament, which was made the second day, to be an emblem of the Church, he saith, "by the Church we ought to understand *Ecclesiam Christi in Sanctis*, &c. the Church of Christ in his Saints; the Church of Christ in those whose names are

* Tom. 8. Enarratio in Psal. 47. [vol. 4. p. 415. Par. 1681.]

written in heaven, the Church of Christ in those who do not yield to the temptations of this world. *Ipsi enim digni sunt nomine FIRMAMENTI*, for these are worthy the name of firmament, or strength." Therefore the Church of Christ in those *qui firmi sunt*, who "are strong (concerning whom the Apostle speaks, we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak) is called the FIRMAMENT. For hearken and acknowledge, how this Church is called by this name in the Apostolical writings," (and then he quotes this place to Timothy) "which is the Church of the living God, *columna et firmamentum veritatis*, the pillar and support of truth."

By these principally the truth is maintained: for it is most plainly delivered by the Apostles themselves, that men and women, by their wicked lives, did turn apostates from the faith. And we find by experience, as well as their instructions, that nothing doth more quench the Spirit of God, nothing is more contrary to true wisdom, than filthiness and impurity, which we must abandon therefore, and not think we can do very considerable service to the truth, by the bare profession of it: but upon the foundation Jesus Christ, we must seriously endeavour to raise the superstructure of a holy life, whereby we shall adorn, recommend, and effectually promote our religion.

It must not be denied, indeed, that a multitude professing true faith in Christ, though their lives be not so regular as they ought to be, are not unserviceable to our religion: nay, in some cases, by their steadiness in the truth, give no small support unto it. Especially, when they likewise continue united together, by partaking constantly of the same sacraments. Whereby they are joined to those who are truly good, and remain a part of the Christian society; till their lives be so bad that they are thrown out of the Church, as not fit to have communion with it. And therefore out of such a Church, consisting of those that profess the faith of Christ entirely, and worship him purely, without any dangerous mixtures, no man ought to depart, merely because every one therein is not knit to Christ by such hearty love and obedience as that faith ought to produce. For they that are only in outward communion with such a Church, are in a good way to something more; and therefore ought not to be rejected as no Christians. For by external communion, the inward lively communion with God our Saviour is produced, set forward, and promoted: and it is something to own Christ, and acknowledge him for our

Lord and Master ; and receive constant instructions from his ministers, whereby we are convinced of our duty. Which though it doth not at present make them good and faithful servants, yet they may be so in time : and the way to make them so, is not to leave them to themselves, by separating from them ; but to admonish, reprove and exhort them to become living members of Christ's body, that they may do him greater service, by recommending his religion effectually to the world. As all those do, who separate from the wickedness of the world, though they continue mixed with the wicked that are in the Church ; till they can, in an orderly manner, and after regular proceedings, be thrown out of it. Whereas, on the contrary, they, who upon pretence of the wicked being mixed with the godly, depart from the external communion of the Church, have very much dishonoured religion, and help to destroy the Church by endless separations.

For when they have so departed from the Church, they are not sure they depart from the wicked ; though it be sure they have left the communion of a great many good men and women, who are mingled in common with the bad. And what advantage can such men propound unto themselves, or unto true religion and godliness ; when they certainly forsake the society of a great many truly good men, for an imaginary departure from the wicked ? Because, after all the care they can take, they cannot be sure there are no wicked among them : but they leave a Church, in which it is notorious there are a great number of holy people, and erect congregations, for ought they can certainly know, of such as conceit themselves religious, merely from this separation.

This is not the means therefore of upholding truth, and of promoting godliness. But if we be seriously bent on that, the Apostle hath shewn us the way in the next Epistle, 2 Tim. ii. 19, " Let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." Whosoever doth so, he is an excellent servant of Jesus Christ, and of his truth ; which was promoted by nothing more, I might say by nothing so much, as by the eminent piety and virtue of the first preachers of Christianity, and of the generality of those who were called by Christ's name. Some bad people there were among them (as we learn by the Church of Corinth), which did not unchurch them, nor make them unfit for communion with them. " For in a great house (as the Apostle there speaks in the next verse, 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21), there are not only vessels of gold and

silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. But if a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for his Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Thus the Apostle writes immediately after these words, "Let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." Whatsoever becomes of others, he shall become an useful servant of his Master Christ, "a vessel of honour," or an instrument to do him honour, by being "fitted to every good work."

There are eminent testimonies of this, not only in Christian but in Pagan writers also, that hereby the truth of Christ prevailed and got the upper hand in the world. For Julian* himself upbraids the priests of his religion, with the marvellous piety of the Galilæans (as he calls Christians), whose singular humanity and charity, even to strangers, nay, to Pagans, when those of their own religion neglected them, together with the gravity of their manners and composed behaviour (though he call it feigned), had such great effect, that by this means, as he acknowledges, Christianity so increased, that its growth could no way be hindered, but by their outdoing Christians in these worthy qualities.

And such an eminent virtue it must be, and that alone, which can restore our religion to its primitive lustre: nay, that which will preserve it from being lost, where it is planted. For as fast as true piety and virtue decays, so fast doth the Church go to ruin. And therefore, if we have an hearty love to our own Church, and the saving truth of God, which is there professed and asserted, we must study to uphold it by this means. Not by seeking for a purer Church (which is impossible, as to faith and worship, and manners too, to be found), but by endeavouring to amend one another, by purifying ourselves in the first place from all filthiness, both of the flesh and of spirit; and then by admonishing others that do not live as they ought, of the error of their ways, and calling them to repentance.

Which course, I wish all they who have separated from our communion, would consider whether they ever took? Did they not first forsake us, and then say, before they tried, that we have people incorrigibly wicked amongst us? This is not the way (to say nothing of what sort of people they have

* Epist. 49. ad Arsacium, in fragm. p. 557.

among themselves) of saving us all from perishing : but, as it proceeds commonly from too much pride and conceitedness, and from great want of charity ; so it produces lamentable effects. For under a pretence of making the Church more holy, it destroys both holiness and the Church ; by breaking the unity of it, by disgracing religion, by turning it into disputes and vain jangling, by endless separations, under the notion of greater and more refined purity ; till the Church be crumbled into so many little bits and fractions, that little more than the name of a Church remains.

Let us therefore preserve union among ourselves as much as is possible, that we may preserve the Church and truth. And then there may be the more hope of reclaiming the ungodly ; who will receive an admonition or reproof far better from one of their society, who calls them brethren, than from one that separates from them as mere strangers and foreigners, with whom they have nothing to do in matters of religion.

Would to God this were more seriously practised among us ; that we would be as forward, charitably to reprove men for their wickedness, as we are even to reproach them, perhaps uncharitably, for their false opinions. It might be a means of their cure, an effectual remedy for their amendment, when piously and prudently administered ; and a means of bringing those back, who are gone astray from us, that there “ may be no divisions among us, but we may be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

PART III.

HOW THE CHURCH DISCHARGES THIS OFFICE, OF A PILLAR AND GROUND OF TRUTH.

WHAT the Psalmist saith concerning Jerusalem, or the Church of the Jews, which was wont there to assemble, is more fully verified in the Christian Church : “ Great and glorious things are spoken of thee, O thou city of God,” Psalm lxxxvii. 3. This great city St. John saw descending out of heaven, “ having the glory of God,” Rev. xxi. 10, 11. And in the verse before, he calls this Church, “ the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” There is a special presence, that is, of God in it ; and a special love of the Lord Jesus to it. For it is, “ the

body of Christ, and the fulness of Him that fills all things." To this, St. John saith, "they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations:" against this, our Saviour promises, "the gates of hell shall not prevail." "The pure water of life, clear as crystal," runs therein; here grows the "tree of life," (Rev. xxii. 1, 2); and it is, as it were, the paradise and garden of God.

Which things shew what an honour, what a happiness it is, to be a citizen of this holy Jerusalem. Whosoever they be, that by a cordial faith in Christ, and sincere love to him, join themselves to this body, are made members of Christ, children of God, companions of angels, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. They are under the protection of the Almighty; under the guidance of his Holy Spirit; under the care and tender love of that great and glorious Lord, who is the "Prince of all the kings of the earth, and hath all power in heaven, as well as earth," invested in him. For the Church is the "house and family of God," nay, the "temple of the living God," (2 Cor. vi. 16, 18); for he hath said, as it there follows, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and will be their God, and they shall be my people: I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty."

These things are great indeed, and exceeding glorious.

But not content with these privileges, which are as a royal diadem and crown of glory, on the head of the Church; there are those who would adorn her with prouder titles, and set her forth in an adulterous dress, and a presumptuous glory; making her, in a manner, equal to her Head, the Lord Christ. For they have snatched one of the incommunicable properties of God, and fixed it as a jewel on the top of the Church's crown; telling us that she is an infallible guide who cannot mislead us: that is, though she may go astray and play the harlot in life and practice, yet she cannot err, nor mistake in her judgment: so that if we listen to what she says, we shall never wander, but always be in the right.

For the proof of this, they first suppose themselves to be the Church of Christ, and they alone; and then they abuse this place of holy Scripture to assert this divine prerogative to be in his Church; that is, in themselves. But I have exposed the bold folly of these pretences by shewing that the Church here spoken of is the Church of Ephesus, and that Timothy was the principal pillar and ground of truth in

this Church. Which doth not signify, I have shewn, that either the Church or Timothy were the very foundation of the Christian faith, upon whose credit the authority, the truth and certainty, of all religion depends; but the supporters of the truth, who testified, maintained, upheld, and propagated the faith of Christ.

For the more full understanding of which I shall briefly shew (before I proceed to the last thing propounded), first, What power it is that we herein ascribe to the Church, particularly to the bishops and governors thereof. Secondly, What power it cannot pretend unto, nor ought to be yielded to any Church, or person whatsoever.

1. As for the first of these, What the power is we allow the Church, when we say, it upholds, maintains, and testifies to the truth, it is as much as to inquire of what authority the testimony of the Church is, how much it ought to weigh with us, and how far we ought to yield to it: to the testimony, for instance, of the present Church, of which we are members (for it hath as much authority as any other), when it propounds truth to us, and presses it upon our belief. Are we to believe it, merely because the Church saith it?

In answer to which we affirm, that the testimony of the Church is that whereby we are both informed of the truth, and induced, as by the first external motive, to faith in Christ. Mr. Hooker calls it the key, as others do the door, which lets us into the knowledge of the great mystery of godliness, which is preserved in this house of God.

If we allow it not this we allow it nothing; nor can it, or any person in it, be said to be a pillar and ground of truth, unless it do something to the bringing us acquainted with the truth, which it propounds and sets before us, and testifies to be that which Christ hath left with his Church, to be delivered down to all generations. For it conveys the holy Scriptures to us, and calls upon us to consider and study them; that therein, by the help of the pastors of the Church (to whom this office, I have shewn, principally belongs), we may find all necessary truths in order to our salvation. Which testimony being the testimony of men that profess faithfulness, honesty, and a good conscience, as the great thing in their religion, is the highest of all human testimonies, and cannot but work very strongly and powerfully on men's minds, when Christians are such as they profess to be: and as they are, it ought to work thus far upon all sorts of men, even upon those who are out

of the Church ; as to incline them to have a reverend regard to that faith and those Scriptures, and to look into them and consider them, which they see such multitudes of people, and some of them very wise as well as devout, constantly esteem as the very truth of God, transmitted to them from his Son, by the Apostles who attended on him from his first appearing till he went to heaven.

This moved St. Austin, when he was yet in part an infidel, being a Manichee, to believe the Gospel, according to that famous discourse of his, in answer to the Epistle of Manichæus, which contained, in a manner, the whole belief of that party ; *Ego non crederem evangelio, nisi me Ecclesiæ Catholicæ auctoritas commoveret*,* which is to be thus translated, according to the phrase of the Africans ; “ I had not believed the Gospel, unless the authority of the catholic Church had moved me thereunto.” For it is evident (as hath been shewn by our writers since the beginning of the Reformation),† he speaks of himself when a Manichee, as the words immediately following declare : “ Those whom I obeyed when they said, Believe the Gospel ; why should I not obey when they say, Do not believe Manichæus ? ” Which doth not signify that the credit of the Gospel is founded upon the Church’s authority, but that this was the first motive to incline him to look into the Gospel, and consider it as a divine book, which would inform him in the way of salvation. Thus he explains himself in the very foregoing chapter, where, setting aside the sincere wisdom taught in the Church, which they would not believe, he reckons up abundance of other things which might serve to keep him in the catholic Church, *viz.* “ the consent of people and nations,” &c., and then thus concludes : “ These numerous and great, and most dear ties of the Christian name, may very well hold a man that believes in the catholic Church ; although by reason of the slowness of his understanding, or the defects of his life, the truth do not yet shew itself most openly unto him. Whereas among the Manichees there were none of these things to invite, or to hold him, but a bare promise of truth wherewith they made a noise ; which if they could have shewn so manifestly that it could not be doubted, he confesses it was to be preferred before all those things whereby he was held in the Catholic church.”

* Tom. 6. contra Epistolam Fundamenti, cap. 5. [vol. 8. p. 154. Par. 1688.] † Vid. D. Whitakerum de sacra Script. Q. 3. cap. 8.

Which words are an evident proof that he speaks of the authority of the Church, as only moving and inducing him to believe the Scriptures, and to join himself to their society before the TRUTH was manifested to him ; which he was to find there (in the Scriptures), and which he preferred before the authority of the Church. Which he elsewhere tells the Donatists, was not to be believed upon its own credit ;* “but whether they hold the Church, let them not shew but from the canonical books of the divine Scriptures ; for we neither do not say that we ought to be believed, because we are in Christ’s Church, because that Church which we hold was commended to us by Optatus, or Ambrose, or other innumerable bishops of our communion, or because it is approved by Councils, or because miracles are every where wrought in it : these and such like things are therefore to be approved, because they are done in the catholic Church ; but it is not therefore manifested to be the catholic Church, because these things are done in it. Our Lord Jesus himself, when he rose from the dead and offered his body to be touched, as well as seen by his disciples, lest they should think there was any fallacy in it, judged it meet rather to confirm them by the testimonies of the Law, and the Prophets and Psalms ; shewing how all things were fulfilled, which were predicted. And so he commanded his Church saying, that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name, beginning at Jerusalem.” This he testified was written in the Law, the Prophets, and Psalms ; this we hold commended from his mouth. These are the documents, these the foundations, these the strong grounds of our cause. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, of some believers, that they sought the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. What Scriptures ? But the canonical books of the Law and the Prophets : “to which are added the Gospels, the Apostolical Epistles, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Revelation of St. John. Search all these, and bring forth something manifest, whereby ye may demonstrate the Church, either to have remained only in Africa, or to be to come out of Africa, &c.” This is an illustrious testimony, he thought the Church itself was to be warranted by the Scriptures, which did not therefore receive their authority from the Church, but give it all the authority it hath. And after all it was not the authority of the present Church, barely, that moved him when

* L. de unitate Ecclesie, cap. 16. [ch. 19, ut supra, vol. 9, p. 373.]

he was a Manichee ; but of the catholic Church from the beginning. Occham* thinks he speaks of the Church in the Apostles' times alone, which moved him to believe. And others (as Gabriel Biel) confess he speaks of the authority of the Church, *à tempore Christi et Apostolorum*, &c. from the time of Christ and of the Apostles, down to his days.

Such authority cannot but weigh very much, even with those that do not yet believe, if it be seriously pondered ; but much more with those that are already Christians. Whether they be novices and weaklings, who are as yet doubtful in the faith, though in the Church ; the testimony and authority of it ought to confirm and quiet their minds (as it did St. Austin's, it appears by the place before-named), and keep them close to the Christian society, till they may themselves come better acquainted with the truth, and more fully understand the holy Scriptures, which the Church delivers to them, and puts into their hands as the word of God. Or whether they be more grown Christians (and indeed all sorts of persons in the Church), who ought to be so far wrought upon, even by its authority, as to be persuaded thereby to read constantly, to consider and ponder seriously, and to practise those plain lessons faithfully, which the holy Scriptures teaches them, till it work effectually upon their hearts, and purge them so thoroughly from all bad affections, that they may more perfectly understand the truth.

Thus much is indisputable ; for God hath appointed outward means for the conveying divine truth to our belief ; and this means is ordinarily the Church : to which we ascribe these two great things in this business.† First, the office of a witness, testifying the authority of holy Scripture to us : secondly, of an instrument in God's hand, to lead us into the understanding of the Scriptures, and by its ministry in preaching and expounding them to beget a divine faith in us.

But further than this, we cannot, we must not go. For the last resolution of our faith is not into the testimony of the Church, but into the testimony of God himself, which we find recorded in the holy Scripture, delivered by the Church unto us. Thus St. Austin most admirably discourses in that

* Fr. White's Answer to Fisher's second Conference, p. 24.

† Answer to Charity mistaken, Sect. 5.

very book against Manichæus,* his letter, from whence the forenamed saying, ("I had not believed the Gospel, unless the Church's authority had moved me to it") is wont, at every turn, to be objected to us by those of the Romish persuasion. "Thou doest nothing but praise what thou believest, and deride what I believe. Now since I can be even with thee, and do the very same, praise what I believe, and deride what thou believest; what is to be done? But that we leave and relinquish those who invite us to know things certain; and afterwards require us to believe things uncertain (let those of the Roman Church mark this), and that we follow them, who invite us first to believe that which we cannot yet see into; that being made stronger in the faith itself, we may come to understand what we believe: NOT MEN NOW, BUT GOD HIMSELF INWARDLY ESTABLISHING AND ILLUMINATING OUR MIND."

It is impossible to read this passage, and not see that this Father thought our faith is not ultimately resolved into the testimony of the Church; but by that being invited to believe the holy Scriptures, we are established (upon the serious reading of them) in the Christian faith, and knowledge of the truth by God himself. Upon whose word in the holy Scriptures, and not upon men, we bottom our faith. Upon the testimony and authority of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and the testimony of Divine men, inspired by them; who, by miracles, and signs, and mighty deeds, and a prophetic spirit, proved themselves to be sent of God; and have left his mind and will upon record in the Scriptures of truth. Which the Church, indeed, in all parts of the world hath kept and preserved, and faithfully transmitted down to us, and now propounds to our faith: but it is not merely what the Church saith that makes us believe, but what God himself saith in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son Jesus Christ; and what Jesus Christ saith, concerning his rising from the dead, and sending the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles: which being fulfilled evidently proved him to be the Son of God, the Saviour of the world; and them to be his Apostles and ministers who declare to men the true way of salvation.

So the Church directs and guides us to the Scriptures of truth; but they resolve and assure our faith, being the very word of God. The authority of God's Church is the first motive which leads us to esteem the Scriptures; but being led

* Cap. 14. contra Epist. quam vocant Fundamenti. [ut supra, vol. 8. p. 160.]

thither we find in the matter of them that which gives us full satisfaction by bestowing our pains in reading, or hearing, and considering the mysteries contained therein. The Church holds out this light to us; but it is by this light that we see what is the mind and will of God. To this the Church points us, and bids us attend to it; for this it disposes and prepares us; it leads us by the hand to this as the only sure foundation of our faith (because herein we find God himself speaking to us), and moreover, by the ministry of the Church, we are assisted in understanding the sense of the holy Scriptures; but they contain in themselves that divine authority and truth whereby we come to a certain faith. The Church tells us such and such things are true; and we find them to be so by examining the Scriptures; which the Bereans searched daily, whether those things were so, which the Apostles preached; and therefore many of them believed, not merely because the Apostles told them they ought to do so,* but because they found what they said in the holy Scriptures, Acts xvii. 11, 12. And so far as any Church speaks according to the truth contained therein, it is to be believed and followed. But if it bring no Divine word for its warrant, if it propound other doctrines which are not there, it hath no authority to make such doctrines the matter of our faith; much less, to set up its own authority above the Scriptures; as they do who say, the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church. Which is the doctrine of no less men than Baronius and Bellarmine, to name no more.

The former of * which argues, that because we receive these holy books to be writings of the Apostles and Evangelists, and not forged under their names, upon the testimony of the Church; therefore all the writings of the New Testament received their authority from the Church's tradition, which is *fundamentum Scripturarum*, as he ventures to say, "the foundation of the Scriptures." The other† is no less positive, that if we take away the authority of the present Church, and the present Council, we call in doubt the whole Christian faith. "For the firmness of all ancient Councils, and of all doctrines, depends upon the authority of the present Church."

This is very presumptuous talk; for by the Church they mean themselves, and then by the testimony of the Church

* Ad annum 53. n. 16, 11. [n. 10, 11. vol. 1. p. 390. col. 1. Luc. 1638.]

† L. 2. de Sacrament. C. 25. Tertium. [vol. 3. p. 109. col. 1. Prag. 1721.]

(that is, their own testimony) they mean such a divine witness as assures us by its own authority, without any other proof. Which are the great points of difference between us in this matter. For we assert, first, that the office of leading men to the holy Scriptures, and so to faith, belongs to every Church as much as to them: and secondly, that no Church can bring people to faith by its own testimony and authority, but by the doctrine of the holy Scriptures; nor is any Church whatsoever to be heard in matters of divine truth, further than it can prove its doctrines by the authority of God's word, and teaches things agreeable thereunto.

2. Which leads to the second thing, briefly to shew what power and authority the Church cannot pretend unto in matters of faith.

And, first, it appears by what hath been said, that it hath not a sovereign, absolute, prophetic authority, independent upon the rule of the holy Scriptures; so that we must take whatsoever it saith for true, without consulting them. This is the ambitious pretence of the great doctors of the Roman Church, who give the Church (meaning thereby the present Roman Church) an authority over all things; not depending on the Scriptures, but upon which the Scriptures themselves depend: so that without the authority of this Church all truth is doubtful. Which is a manifest principle of infidelity, making all religion stand to the courtesy of a company of men, who in such matters are the least to be trusted of all other Christians that we are acquainted withal.

The Church hath no authority to propound any doctrine, as necessary to salvation, which is not delivered in the holy Scriptures, but depends solely on the authority of its own tradition. This is another of their ambitious attempts, who having arrogated to themselves alone the whole power of the Church; make that power so unlimited that it can supply the defects of the Scripture, and make things unwritten to become matters of faith. Which is such an unbounded prerogative that we may have a new faith as often as they please to pretend a tradition for it; though they cannot prove it. For we must rest in the authority of the present Church which affirms it, and that against the very Scripture itself, which tells us it is able to make a man of God perfect; and against the testimony of the universal Church, which, I have shewn, forbids the producing of any other faith, but that which was evidently delivered by the Apostles there.

We cannot allow the Church an infallible authority, that is, such an assistance in her doctrines and proposals, that she cannot err in anything she defines. In controversies, indeed, arising about matters of faith, we own and reverence the authority of the Church,* so as not to contest the public judgment, but to prefer it before our own private conceits, in doubtful things. But as it ought to proceed in its determinations by the rule of God's word, so we think it possible it may mistake in the application of this rule, and therefore we do not blindly resign ourselves to its authority, without all regard to the holy Scriptures, unto which the Church ought to have a respect in all its determinations. No, that is another proud pretence of the present Roman Church, that they cannot mistake in their definitions; and, therefore, we must submit unto them without examination. From whence this intolerable mischief hath ensued, that it hath made them both insensible of their errors, and careless to seek any cure of them, nay, utterly incapable of a remedy. For as one of our own divines excellently speaks† (whose words those are) this conceit of their infallibility is to them "both a sufficient reason for that which is most unreasonable, and a sufficient answer to that which is most unanswerable." To this they retreat upon all occasions when they are not able to maintain their ground; they have no other way to defend their errors when they are plainly set before their eyes, but to tell us confidently they cannot err. Which is a very strange boldness; for we demonstrate, in many instances, that they have erred, erred most grossly, particularly in this, that they have added new articles to the old Creed, to be believed under pain of damnation; and added a new canon of Scripture to the Old Testament, against the clearest evidence in the records of the universal Church, that the books they have newly received were never acknowledged for canonical Scripture.

If by the Church, indeed, they would understand the Church truly catholic, the whole body of Christ in all times, places, and ages; and if by matters of faith they would understand those grand articles which I have mentioned in the first part of this discourse; and if by being infallible, they would understand, not an absolute impossibility of erring (which human nature is not capable of), but not actual error; there

* Artic. 20.

† Dr. Potter's Answer to Charity mistaken, Sect. 5.

are none of us make any question, but the Church is infallible. That is, the whole Church hath not erred, nor shall not err, in the whole faith, or in any necessary part thereof; for such error would cut men off from Christ, the Head, and so leave him no Church at all, which is impossible. It hath been the very scope of my first discourse to shew that the Church hath always kept the great fundamental truths of our religion, and not erred in them, but transmitted them down to us, whole and undefiled, till the Church of Rome, in the Council of Trent, corrupted the faith by their errors which they have mixed with it.

For to a particular Church, such as that of Rome is, we cannot allow this privilege of not erring, because we know they have erred, even in fundamental truths, and thereby ceased to be Churches. Witness those glorious Churches to which Christ himself sent his letters by St. John the Apostle.

These prerogatives, therefore, not belonging to any Church, every one must be content with those two offices before-mentioned, which are sufficient. First, the office of a witness, testifying the authority of the holy Scriptures unto its members: secondly, of God's instrument, by whose ministry, in opening, expounding, and urging the holy Scriptures, the Holy Ghost begets a divine faith in us: and by performing these offices it supports, and continues, and propagates the truth; and so may be called "the pillar and ground" thereof.

The meaning of which I shall now distinctly set before the reader's eyes; that I may give a short account of the fourth and last thing propounded in the beginning.

PART IV.

HOW THE CHURCH MAY APPROPRIATE TO ITSELF THIS TITLE.

1. First, Every Church, and every person in it, especially the bishops and pastors, are "the pillar and ground of truth," *ex officio*, by duty and office; whereby they are obliged to keep, maintain and uphold the truth. This always was, and always will be incumbent on them; which is sufficient to fill up the sense of such attributes as these; which do not always note performance of duty, but only obligation to it. As when our Saviour saith to his disciples, "ye are the salt of the earth;" it doth not signify that they were necessarily so (for he supposes immediately the salt might lose its savour), but that they ought to be so; and if they were not so, would be "good for

nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot." Matth. v. 13.

2. But, secondly, The first Churches of Christ, in the Apostles' time, were *actu et effectu*, actually and effectually the pillar of truth; that is, they faithfully discharged this office, and performed their duty, constantly maintaining the truth as it is in Christ, in its purity and simplicity. For the Apostles were a part of those Churches, whom God led into all truth: which they taught sincerely and entirely while they lived: and do at this day, instruct us in the holy Scriptures, in the whole truth, necessary to our salvation.

3. But we cannot say the same of all succeeding Churches, that they did faithfully perform this office, though in duty they also were bound so to do. No, some of them were so far from being pillars of the truth, that they let it fall to the ground. We have strange instances of it, with which I shall not fill these papers, in the history of the Church; which shew us, that if we take not heed to ourselves, and the doctrine that is delivered to us, we have no security, that we, or any other particular Church, shall continue firm and stedfast supporters of the truth. For pillars themselves may decay; and, if they be not well looked after, will go to ruin, and fall to the earth.

4. Even this very Church of Ephesus, which was a pillar and ground of truth, while Timothy presided in it, afterward began, before all the Apostles were dead, to remit its first love and zeal for the truth (Rev. ii. 4), and now is utterly subverted and not to be found. Which is a demonstration the Apostle did not, in these words, intend to teach that the Church cannot err, but that (as I said) it is in duty bound, by its calling and office, to preserve the truth pure and entire. For he himself foresaw this Church would be haunted with "grievous wolves," after his departure (Acts xx. 29, 30), who, no doubt, came in sheep's clothing; as they also among themselves did, who, he foretold, would arise, "speaking perverse things to draw disciples after them." And immediately after he had here called the Church, or Timothy, the pillar of truth; he admonishes him (in the beginning of the next chapter, 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2), that there would be an apostasy from the faith, as the Spirit expressly declared. For according to what our Saviour predicted, there was scarce any Church, but the enemy sowed tares among the wheat; which very much hindered the growth thereof. So we are informed by Hegesippus, a very

ancient Christian historian ;* who saith, " That as soon as the sacred choir of Apostles were dead, and that generation was gone, who had heard the inspired wisdom with their own ears, then begun ἡ σύστασις τῆς ἀθέου πλάνης, a conspiracy or combination of impious or atheistical error, by the deceit of false teachers ; who make a bare-faced opposition to the truth of the Gospel."

And yet for all this, the speech of the Apostle is proper enough : for a Church or its pastor may be the pillar of truth, in regard of their duty, as I have often said, though they prove negligent in their office. Just as the priest among the Jews, was called, "the messenger of the Lord of Hosts," whose lips should so preserve knowledge, that the people "should seek the law at his mouth ;" because this was the end of his office, for which he was ordained ; though at the same time, the prophet complains, that "they were departed out of the way, and caused many to stumble at the law : and had corrupted the covenant of Levi," Mal. ii. 7, 8. The like we read in other places of the holy book, that the prophets were not true to their trust, but declared the visions of their own heart, not the word of the Lord ; and lead the people into error and falsehood ; feeding them with lies, instead of truth.

5. Further, I must observe, that there is no promise made to any particular Church, that it shall always be a pillar of truth ; no, not to the Church of Rome, which now so boldly lays claim, and that solely, to this privilege. But quite contrary, there is a terrible threatening to this very Church, included in that admonition which this very Apostle gives them. Which is sufficient to shew that Christ gave no such privilege to this Church, as that it should never err ; but directly contrary, supposed it might err, and err even to apostasy ; when he bids them take heed lest they were cut off by unbelief, as the Jews were, from the fellowship of the saints. Read Rom. xi. 21, 22 : "They (speaking of the Jews) were broken off by unbelief ; and thou (speaking to the Roman Christians) standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear, (hearken to this, O ye of the present Roman Church). For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold the goodness and severity of God ; on them which fell, severity ; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness : OTHERWISE THOU ALSO SHALT BE CUT OFF."

* Euseb. L. 3. Eccles. Hist. c. 32. [p. 104 Par. 1659.]

From whence we may thus argue ; if God had granted to the Roman Church the privilege of being a pillar of truth, infallibly and immutably, unto all generations ; all these suppositions were vain, and these exhortations utterly needless and frivolous ; for it would have been absolutely impossible it should be cut off, and absolutely necessary it should continue. And yet the Apostle plainly supposes otherwise, and took it for granted it might fail. For these two are directly opposite, to stand and to fall ; to continue, and to be cut off ; to be an everlasting pillar, and to be broken off. For it is proper to a pillar to stand and support : but to be cut off (as he supposes they might be) is to fall to the ground, and not to be able to support one's self, much less others.

Now that they of that Church have gone far towards this condition (according to the Apostle's supposition), by falsifying the truth of Christ, even a part of the Apostolical faith (and so have not continued a firm and stedfast pillar of truth, but maintained and supported dangerous errors and heresies), is apparent from this alone, if there were no more ; that they limit and confine the catholic Church to themselves alone, and exclude all other Christians from it, who will not submit to their bishop and decrees. The impicty of which is so great that it is not easy to be expressed ; for it is, in truth, to make the Church not catholic, but particular. How new, false, sacrilegious, scandalous, schismatical and heretical, this one article of the Roman Creed is ; one of our own * bishops hath demonstrated evidently in a book on purpose (to which I refer the reader), which he had reason to call the GRAND IMPOSTOR.

It would enlarge this treatise too much beyond my intention, or else it would be easy to shew, both when they began to let truth fall to the ground, and how they proceeded to fail in their duty, and to betray their trust ; till they quite altered the ancient Catholic faith, in the Council of Trent. Which now they cry up as the great pillar of truth ; when it did nothing but lend a lame support to the most notorious falsehoods : which it established as doctrines of faith, when they were before but erroneous opinions in that Church. I call it lame, because of the numerous flaws that there were, both in the constitution, and in the proceedings of that Council ; which make it of no authority. For in the very beginning of it,†

* Bishop Morton.

† Sess. 4. [Labbe, Concil. vol. 11. p. 747. Lut. Par. 1672.]

they decreed that “no man should wrest the Scripture to a sense contrary to that which the holy Mother-Church (*i. e.* themselves) hath held, and holds.” And so established all the tenets of that Church, before they examined them by the Scripture; and engaged themselves to contradict their own decree, by wresting the Scriptures to their own sense, for the maintenance of what their Church then held. All the bishops likewise, there assembled, were sworn to support the Papacy of the Roman Church, and the rules of the holy Fathers: whereby they were obliged to maintain the usurpations of that See upon all the bishops in the world (whose authority was thrown down, and thereby the pillars of the truth (as I have shewn them to be) trampled under foot, when Boniface was declared Universal Bishop), and upon kings and princes, whom Hildebrand trod under foot; yea, upon the whole Church, over which Pope Leo exalted himself, when he got it declared in the Lateran Council, that he was above a General Council, and the Universal Church:* being blasphemously called, by his flatterers, the Spouse of the Church, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. From which very phrase of Spouse, no less man than Bellarmine† himself, labours to prove the Pope to be absolutely above the Universal Church, and above a General Council; because it is contrary to the Apostle, and to the order of nature, that the wife should be above the husband.

This is sufficient to shew what we ought to think of the present Roman Church; which is so far from being infallible, that it hath erred more than any other Church.

6. But though there be no promise either to that or any other particular Church, of being preserved from error, yet the universal Church, in some part or other of it, we are sure will always be a pillar and ground of the whole truth, necessary to salvation; because our Saviour hath promised the “gates of hell shall not prevail against it:” that is, the Church shall be perpetual; which it cannot be, unless it holds the truth entirely, whereby it is joined to Christ its Head. And thus one of their own Cardinals‡ understood the infallibility of the Church, with which they now make so much noise. When we say, “the Church cannot err in faith or manners, it must

* Sess. 11. [Ibid. p. 311.]

† L. 2. de Concil. Auctor. c. 17. [vol. 2. p. 57. col. 1. Prag. 1721.]

‡ Turrecremata Sum. ac Eccles. L. 2. c. 91. et L. 3. c. 60.]

be thus taken, according to the doctrine of the Fathers ; that God doth so assist his Church to the end of the world, that the true faith shall never fail out of the same. For to the world's end, there shall be no time, wherein some, though all, shall not have true faith working by love." Unto this exposition we heartily submit ; but that the present Church of Rome, or indeed any other particular Church, cannot degenerate, and depart from the right faith, we can by no means allow ; but think ourselves bound by the most sacred ties, to oppose these arrogant pretences, that the Church is infallible, and that they are the Church. They are no more the Church than any other company of men professing the Christian faith : nor so much neither, for there are truer believers than they. I have proved also that other Churches have erred, and so may they ; nay, they have erred, and that so grossly, as to be able by no other means to maintain their errors, but by pretending they cannot err.

And therefore, let no man be so forgetful of these things as to trust them to be his guides ; fancying they cannot mislead him. They have misled those that rely upon them ; and have led them into a maze, or labyrinth, in which it is impossible for them to find their way, and know what is the truth. For if we should grant them their Church cannot err, they are not agreed, nor ever will, what they mean by the Church. Whether the whole body of Christian people (which is the new heresy among them, as some of themselves call it), or a General Council (which the learnedst and best men among them maintain), or the Pope ; who hath a great many on his side ; but they cannot agree about the manner of his definition (whether alone, or in a General Council), nor about the time (whether at any time, or only when he resolves to publish doctrines, as matter of faith), nor about the matter (whether all things, even matters of fact, or only matters of faith) ; and after all, no body can tell, when there is a true Pope. So that all their faith falls to the ground, and they cannot be certain of anything they believe ; because they cannot be certain of the very ground and foundation of their faith ; which is their Church.

These things I have only briefly touched (which are more largely handled in other books), that the readers may be sensible how happy they are who are freed from these impostors. And that our people may know their duty in this Church of England, whereof by the grace of God they are members, I

shall conclude this treatise with six considerations more ; whereby the whole, I hope, will be made more useful.

1. First, I desire every one to consider, from what I have said, that this Church, in which we are, is certainly as much a "pillar and ground of truth," as any other ; nay, more than many other Churches. For we openly profess and recite twice a day in our own language, that every one may understand it, the whole Christian faith, comprised in the Apostles' Creed ; with the explication of some part of this faith, by the Nicene Fathers, once every week or more ; and a most distinct explication of the same articles by Athanasius, once a month. That is, we hold, and assert, and maintain, all those things which have always been, and are confessed by all Christians, "the true, ancient, catholic and apostolic faith ;" and the holy Scriptures, wherein this faith is originally contained. And if we knew any thing else to be the mind of God, delivered to us from Christ and his Apostles, by the universal Church, we are prepared to receive it ; and, did it appear, would immediately embrace and propagate it. But the universal Church, as I have shewn, hath declared this to be sufficient, nay, full and perfect ; and moreover, forbidden any other faith to be either composed, or offered to those who would become Christians. To all which (that I have said in the first part), this memorable saying of Pope Leo* the Great, may be added : "The short and perfect confession of the catholic symbol (or Creed) itself, which is sealed in as many sentences as there were Apostles (*i. e.* twelve articles), is so instructed with celestial munition (or defence), that all the opinions of heretics, with this sword alone, may be cut in pieces."

2. And therefore, secondly, every one of us is bound, unless we will betray our trust, and as we will answer it to our Lord Christ, the author of our faith, to hold fast this faith, to preserve it entire, and to defend it ; not suffering any of it to be lost, or any addition to be made to it, as if this were not sufficient to salvation. "Take fast hold of instruction (of those great, substantial, unquestionable truths, mentioned in the beginning), let them not go, keep them, for they are your life ;" as Solomon speaks of wisdom, Prov. iv. 13. They are the wisdom of God our Saviour ; "the rule which the Apostles

* Epist. ad Pulcheriam Augustam. [Epist. 31. vol. 1. p. 858. Venet. 1753.]

preached equally among all nations" (as Venantius Fortunatus* speaks); "the comprehension and perfection of our faith" (as St. Austin,† or an ancient author under his name); the test (as I have shewn) and mark, whereby the faithful are distinguished from unbelievers and heretics. And having this note of a Christian, you ought neither to seek for, nor to admit of any other; being endued with this wisdom, you ought to think yourselves "wise unto salvation." And not be in the least moved with the bugbear name of heretics, or the empty noise of damnation, which they of the Chnrch of Rome thunder out against you. For they signify nothing but the wrath of those, who would drive you into the belief of that, by frights and terrors, into which they cannot draw you by solid proofs and arguments. Turn away your ears both from the one and the other; for as the former is an insignificant sound, so the latter (all their arguments) are but confident sophistry. Which hath been, and is at this day, so evidently demonstrated by our writers, that they can have no excuse who are deceived by them.

3. And thus every one is bound to teach his children diligently; instructing and confirming them in these main points of Christianity; that so the truth may live when we are gone.

Consider, I beseech you, what a necessary duty this is. How should the truth be preserved and supported, but by those that believe it? And how should they believe it, who do not understand it? And how should they understand it, unless they be taught and instructed in it? And who so much concerned to instruct their children, as they that brought them into the world? Their godfathers and godmothers, indeed, are engaged to see this done; but their parents have a further, even a natural obligation to it. And therefore, ought first of all diligently to inform themselves; and by attending to all the means of instruction, which they have in this Church, to increase in true Christian knowledge; that they may be able to teach those who are committed to their care, and prepare them to be catechised and further instructed by those whom God hath set over them.

We are not pillars and supporters of the truth, but the betrayers of it, if we take no care about this. Which is one

* Præfat. in Symbol. [Monum. Patr. Orthodox. p. 1227. Basil. 1569.]

† Serm. 95. de Temp.

great reason why some have easily forsaken the true religion here taught and professed, and condemned this Church (an horrid crime, if you seriously weigh the consequences of it), by renouncing communion with it, as no part of the body of Christ. Men may be soon persuaded, by confident talkers, to part with that which they do not understand; especially if they apprehend any danger in keeping it, or hope to gain by letting it go. Why should they hazard the least hair of their head, for they know not what? Nay, why should they be at all concerned for it, any more than a man is for the seed that is scattered in the highway, from which he expects no crop? To that, you know, our blessed Lord compared him that "heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not; for then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart," Matth. xiii. 19.

4. You must endeavour therefore to profit by all such instructions as these; and to grow in the knowledge of the holy Scriptures; where God hath revealed his whole mind and will to you, and plainly published all those truths, which belong to the great mystery of godliness. You ought, for instance, to take heed, how you wantonly and loosely interpret, or apply them, according to your own sudden or careless fancies (that is a great profanation of the sacred books), and yet you must not, for fear of this, be persuaded to throw them out of your hands; but rather, with the more solemn, humble and reverend awe of God upon your souls, ponder and weigh what you read therein; especially those things which are plain and evident to every understanding, that by the help of them, and of those whom God hath set over you to guide and direct your minds; you may either inform your understanding in what appears to have difficulty in it, or satisfy yourselves that it is not necessary you should understand it.

For they that would drive you from this hold of the holy Scriptures, intend to deceive you; and would have you depend on that which is far more uncertain than the meaning of any place of Scripture can be. There is no firm ground for us to stand upon, but only this: which all acknowledge is the very word of God, and delivers that which hath been ever accounted the substance of Christian doctrines, in such words as every one may understand them.

And therefore this is, as I have said, the very foundation upon which the Church is built. Which is the pillar of

truth, as it defends the truth out of the Scriptures, and by the Scriptures, against all heretics and other opposers; and as it establishes and supports it, in the hearts of men, by this means, that it may be continued to posterity. This must be added, for the explication of all that hath been said; that the Church, and every person in it, great or small, are pillars, not by themselves, but by the holy Scriptures. For we know those things that belong to our salvation (as Irenæus* begins his third book) by no other persons, than those by whom the Gospel came to us: "Which then truly they preached, but afterwards, by the will of God delivered to us in the Scripture, *fundamentum et columnam fidei nostræ futurum*, to be the FOUNDATION and PILLAR of our faith." Upon these our faith rests and relies; so that they who take the Scriptures from you, take away the foundation and pillar of that truth, which is or ought to be taught in the Church, and that alone. They contain the mind and will of our Lord Christ: who himself being the first foundation, and chief pillar of all, Epiphanius† applies these words to him. When he saith, our Lord is called the door, because by him we enter in; and the way, because by him we walk; and the pillar, because αὐτός ἐστιν ἐδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας (the very words of St. Paul in this place) the ground, or settlement, and stay of truth. And in like manner St. Cyril‡ of Alexandria saith, the pillar of a cloud, and the pillar of fire, each of them represented Christ, because first of all, στήλη καὶ ἐδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας ἐστίν, he is the pillar and ground of truth; and then, because he cannot be shaken or disturbed, &c. which he repeats again upon another occasion, speaking of the pillars which supported the curtains of the tabernacle: "Christ is to be understood," saith he, § "in each pillar, τὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἔρεισμα, τὸ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐδραίωμα, &c. the prop of the Church, the ground of truth, according to the words of Paul." And in the next book, || speaking of the four pillars which supported the vail before the holy place; he saith, that vail was a figure of Christ, who was lifted up on high by the preaching of the Evangelists; and therefore he saith, the four Evangelists were typified by those four pillars, being equally eminent and precious, more valuable than gold and silver.

* Adv. Hæreses. l. 3. c. 1. [p. 172. Venet. 1734.]

† Hæres. 69. Num. 35. [vol. 1. p. 758. Colon. 1682.]

‡ L. 3. de Adorat. in Sp. et Veritate. [vol. 1. p. 84. Lutet. 1638.]

§ Ib. lib. 9. [Ibid. p. 317.]

|| L. 10. [Ibid. p. 334.]

Which shews, that the ancient Christians looked upon the Church as “the pillar and ground of truth,” no otherways, but as it professes, preaches, establishes, and keeps up, the doctrine of Christ and of his Apostles, recorded in the holy Scriptures; unto all which they indifferently apply these words of St. Paul, which are thought immediately to speak of the Church; which supports the truth delivered in the holy Scriptures, from Christ and from his Apostles.

Upon which account the Creed also, which is a comprehensive breviary of the great Scripture doctrines, is wont to have the same attribute given to it: particularly by Epiphanius,* who calls it, τὸ ἐρείσμα τῆς ἀληθείας, “the pillar” (as the Greek word signifies in good authors) “or prop of truth, &c. our life, our hope, and the assurance of immortality.” And by St. Austin,† who tells the Catechumens, in his Exposition of the Creed to them, that it is *fidei catholicæ fundamentum*, &c. the “foundation of the catholic faith, upon which the edifice of the Church arose, built by the hands of the Apostles and Prophets.” Which hath made some learned men ‡ refer these words of St. Paul, not to what goes before, but to the words following, making a full stop at God; and then beginning a new sentence, in this manner. “The pillar and ground of the truth, and without controversy great, is the mystery of godliness, &c.” which reading is countenanced by a Greek edition of the New Testament, at Basil, 1540, where the words are so pointed, as if the sense were this: “God incarnate, and the great truths depending thereupon; ought to be the very foundation of the doctrine thou preachest.” The doctrines of the Creed, that is, are the very foundation and pillars of the Christian faith; as the Jews, it is known, call the great principles of their religion, “the foundation of the foundation, the pillar of wisdom,” as Maimonides speaks when he treats of this matter.

Stick close therefore to the holy Scriptures, and to these articles of the faith in the Apostles’ Creed, which are the fundamental truths of Christianity (it appears by what I have now said), by which the Church of Christ maintains and defends the truth, and the truth upholds the Church, and we defend both.

Hold this fast, as the ground of all; and likewise lay up

* In Exposit. fidei Cathol. n. 19.

† De Symbolo ad Catechum. l. 3. c. 1. [vol. 6: p. 568. Par. 1685.]

‡ Jo. Camer. Jac. Capellus.

the word of God in your heart, that it may settle there, and take root, and bring forth fruit unto holiness, that your end may be everlasting life.

Make the holy Scriptures your rule, and trust to them, according to what the son of Sirach saith of its ancient books, Ecclesiasticus xxxiii. 3 : "A man of understanding trusts in the law ; and the law is faithful to him as an oracle," or, as the asking of Urim : that is, here he may inquire, and have a certain answer, which will not deceive him.

Shew yourselves such men of understanding, as to inquire no where else. And if any Church or person would have you inquire of them only ; take that for an undoubted proof, they are not to be trusted. If they would not guide you by the holy Scriptures (that is, by Christ, the way, as you have seen, who hath shewn us no where else that we know of, what we ought to believe), if they would have you follow their ungrounded traditions, whereby they would enlarge your Creed beyond the ancient bounds ; know that you ought not to follow them, nor be led by them. For such may soon cease to be the pillars and supporters of the truth ; because they leave that whereby they should support it, and place themselves (whom they call the Church) in the stead of it.

An evident sign they are not what they pretend ; for the Church itself ought be demonstrated by the Scriptures. So St. Austin* tells the Donatists in those known words, which are worthy to be preserved in remembrance : "Setting aside all such things as those" (which he had said, they could likewise allege), "let them demonstrate their Church if they can, not in the discourses and rumours of the Africans, not in the councils of their bishops, not in the letters of any disputers whatsoever, not in signs and fallacious wonders (for we are prepared and rendered cautious against these by the word of the Lord), but in the prescript of the Law, in the predictions of the Prophets, in the songs of the Psalms, in the words of the SHEPHERD himself (*i. e.* Christ), in the preachings and labours of the Evangelists ; that is, in all the canonical authorities of the holy books. Let this be done so, as not to gather and relate those things, which are obscurely, or ambiguously, or figuratively spoken there ; which every one may interpret as he pleases, according to his own sense. For such things cannot be rightly understood and expounded ; unless those things which are most clearly spoken, be first held by a firm faith."

* L. de Unitate Ecclesiæ, cap. 16.

This is the very sense of the Church of England; which teaches all her members, first to hold by a firm faith those things which are clearly revealed in the holy Scriptures; and by them to understand and expound those things that are more obscurely delivered: believing nothing to be necessary which is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby; nor receiving the doctrines and decrees of any Church, "unless it may be declared that they be taken from thence." For *hæc sunt causæ nostræ documenta, hæc fundamenta, hæc firmita* (as he there speaks, you heard before), "These are the proofs of our cause, these are its foundations, these are its supports." And therefore, as he also speaks in another chapter of the same book,* which he begins thus: "Let us not hear such speeches as these, these things say I, those things sayest thou; but let us hear, these things saith the Lord. These are certainly books of the Lord, to whose authority we both consent, we both believe, we both obey. There let us seek the Church, there let us discuss our cause." And let us not so much as think of looking after any other articles of faith, but those which were from the beginning, which our Church firmly believes, in the three Creeds, Nice Creed, Athanasius, and that commonly called the Apostles',† because "they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture." For "after the faith confessed and sworn in baptism" (as St. Hilary‡ speaks), "we ought not *quicquam aliud vel ambigere, vel innovare*, either to doubt or innovate any other thing." It is absurd, that is, to doubt whether this be sufficient; or to add any other to it, as if this were not enough. So he interprets it a little after. "Faith is still inquired after, as if there were no faith already: faith is to be written, as if it were not in the heart; being regenerated by faith, we are now taught what to believe, as if that regeneration were without faith. We learn Christ after baptism: as if there could be any baptism without the faith of Christ. It is most safe for us (as it follows a little after) to retain that first and only evangelical faith, confessed and understood in baptism."

5. And that a good and righteous cause may have good defenders and supporters, let us read the holy Scriptures, wherein this faith is contained; chiefly for this end, that we may order our steps, that is, our lives and conversation, accord-

* Cap. 3. de Unitate Ecclesiæ. [ch. 18. vol. 9. p. 371.]

† Article 8.

‡ Ad Constantium August. [vol. 2. p. 543, 545. Veron. 1730.]

ing to the rule of God's word. Let us always remember, that our religion is a mystery of godliness, as was shewn before ; in which we are not well instructed, if it do not teach us to " deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world." Which is the best way also to " continue in the faith," *τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἑδραῖοι* (as the Apostle speaks, most agreeable to these words, which he writes to Timothy), "grounded and settled, or stable and stedfast," Colos. i. 23. For they are the good ground in the Church, "who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience," Luke viii. 15. As much as to say, if we would stand fast in the faith, and not fall away (as our Saviour saith, others would do in time of trial, ver. 13), we must, first, come to hear and read the word of God with unprejudiced minds and upright hearts ; desiring to know the truth and resolved to receive it, though never so contrary to our present inclinations and interests.

This is the honest and good heart, which (secondly) must keep and preserve in mind and heart what it hath thus received ; and not presently let it slip, or lay it aside, as a thing never to be thought of more, after we have heard it. And (lastly) we must, not only in a warm fit of zeal begin to put in practice what we learn, but bring forth fruit with patience or continuance.

This is the way, both to draw others into the Church, and to continue ourselves in it, and to make us constant defenders of the Christian faith : that is, to do our part in this great office, of being the "pillar and ground of truth." Which is a thing incumbent upon the whole Church, and consequently upon every one of us who are members of it. And therefore, remember, that the Christian religion, for which we are to be zealous, is the "acknowledgment of the truth after godliness," as I said before, Tit. i. 1. It is the doctrine of piety ; to the study of which, if we seriously and heartily apply ourselves, it will be our best security against all impostures ; and preserve us from the subtle and crafty insinuations of those, who corrupt or pervert the Christian doctrine ; and finally, be the most powerful means to make Christianity prevail in the world.

Remember the advice of St. Paul to this Church of Ephesus, Ephes. iv. 14, 15, where you may find the true way to continue firm and stedfast, and not to be tossed about, as children, with every blast of doctrine, &c. and that is *ἀληθεύοντες ἐν ἀγάπῃ*, by speaking, or rather following the truth in love ; or

(according to the Hebrew dialect) being fixed and established in the love of God, and of one another. For the Hebrew word *aman* (to which *ἀληθεύω* answers), signifies not only to speak truth, but likewise, to be firm and constant, fixed and established; which, if we be, we shall have a settled, unmoveable confidence of God's love and favour towards us. For he that heartily loves God and his neighbour, will never be startled, much less shaken, by their bold anathemas, though all the world should tell him he shall be damned, if he do not believe this or that proposition, which they say is absolutely necessary to his salvation; because there is something within him that gives them the lie, and assures him there is no truth in them, who say, that God hates and will reject him, who believes all the ancient faith, which works by love. God himself testifies the contrary, by making the truth efficacious in his heart, to purge him from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit; and by changing him into his own likeness, in holiness, love, and goodness. And the more thoroughly any man is renewed in the spirit of his mind, the more perfectly will he be assured that they pronounce a false judgment upon him; and consequently be the more heartily resolved against that religion which makes men so liberal in pouring out curses upon all that do not embrace its novel opinions.

Which brings me to the last thing I would have considered, that,

6. We do not perform our duty (I may safely affirm, nay, confidently aver), we are not the pillar and stay of truth, as we ought to be, unless every one of us in our several places and stations, oppose, with a becoming zeal, the errors, innovations, and encroachments of the Church of Rome; who are the men that are, of all other, most guilty of the just now named uncharitableness, or rather pride and cruelty. For they utterly unchurch us, and, as much as in them lies, cut us off from the body of Christ, and bar the gates of the kingdom of heaven against us. By this alone, if there were nothing else, we are sure they have grossly erred, and live in error; that they deny us to be a part of Christ's Church, who believe and confess with heart and mouth, the whole catholic faith; every thing that is *ὁμολογουμένως*, confessedly, and by universal consent, the ancient Christian belief; in which the Apostles and Martyrs died, by which alone, righteous souls, for many ages, went to heaven; knowing nothing of the Pope's supremacy, or transubstantiation, of the propitiatory sacrifice of the mass for quick and dead, and the rest of their new inventions.

We deserve not the name of Christians, no, nor of men, if we stand not up resolutely against such usurpations and corruptions of the Christian doctrine, and maintain that faith which we profess, and wherein we stand, to be "the true grace of God ; the faith once delivered to the saints." Which is incumbent chiefly upon the bishops and pastors of the Church, who, I have shewn, are the principal pillars of the truth (as Timothy was in the Church of Ephesus), and therefore ought to appear, with all their might, for the support of God's true religion here established : instructing, teaching, exhorting all committed to their charge to be steadfast and immoveable in it to their death. And every honest hearted Christian ought to do the same in his rank and condition, by following those instructions, by fortifying himself against Romish delusions ; by endeavouring to understand the truth, and to detect their errors.

Which are the more earnestly to be opposed, because the new articles of their Creed are not a mystery of godliness ; but tend, many of them, to nurse men up securely in their sins ; such as the doctrines of purgatory, of indulgences, of penances, and (to name no more) of infallibility : which being presumed, as an unquestionable principle, is apt to lead men in the most dangerous errors, and the foulest sins, without any remedy or possibility of recovery, whensoever the infallible guide shall propound them.

This pernicious doctrine, I may add, seems also to be deeply rooted in all their minds ; that an orthodox belief will save them. For this they make the great business of Christianity, to bring men, as they think, to such a faith ; as appears by this that let men be never so bad, their labour is not bestowed to make them quit their sins, but to bring them to their belief ; where, for anything I can see or hear, they may quietly enjoy them. Nay, there are a number of little devices to put them in hope of heaven, without reforming their lives ; provided they believe as the Church believes.

And in this, let me beseech all that read these papers, to take a special care, that they do not imitate them. Let us be watchful, that we do not put a greater cheat upon ourselves, than they would do, by imagining ourselves good Christians, merely because we zealously oppose the errors of Popery. That we ought to do ; but not leave the great thing, the amending of our lives, undone. For may we not destroy and pull down by a wicked life, as much as we build up by con-

tending for the faith? How can others think that we are so much concerned as we seem to be, for truth, when we make no use of it, but let it lie dead in our minds? What pity is it, that their hearts should not love that which is good, whose minds are enlightened to discern that which is true? That their understandings being convinced, their wills should not also be converted? It is a lamentable thing, to profess that we know God, but in our works deny him. This makes us look as if we were of a faction, rather than of the faithful; who oppose others rather as our enemies, than as Christ's; as those that differ from us, rather than as those that differ from the truth.

For if it be the truth that we reverence, why do we not let it rule and govern us? Why do we not love to have it nearer to us, than in our brains? Even in our hearts and affections. For there is no greater truth than this, that ungodliness is the worst of heresies; a wicked life the most opposite of all other things, to the Christian faith.

Let us never forget, therefore, that admonition of the Apostle in the first chapter of the 1st Epistle to Timothy, ver. 19, "Hold faith and a good conscience:" which he repeats again in the third chapter to the deacons, whom he exhorts to "hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience," ver. 9. For if we put away a good conscience, we may easily make shipwreck, even of our faith. Which we have just cause to think, is the reason why some have fallen from this truly Apostolic Church of ours. Concerning which, and concerning whom, I may say, as Epiphanius* (putting this place I have been expounding, and some others together) makes the Apostle speak to Timothy: It is "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth; which many forsaking, are turned *εἰς μύθους καὶ μωρολογίας*, to fables and foolish babblings; neither understanding what they say, nor whereof they affirm."

* Hæres. 40. num. 8.

THE TEXTS EXAMINED, WHICH PAPISTS CITE OUT OF
THE BIBLE, FOR THE PROOF OF THEIR DOCTRINE OF
INFALLIBILITY.

INFALLIBILITY being the great boast of the present Church of Rome, the principle into which she ultimately resolves her faith, and the very foundation of the Papal superstructure : therefore it will be requisite in the first place, for our clearer proceeding, to state the true notion of this infallibility pretended to ; as in mathematics, the clearest science, the definition of the name always precedes the demonstration of the thing, that men may certainly know what they discourse about. Now I confess, this is the more difficult task in this place, because none of their General Councils have yet thought fit to define anything about it ; and their particular doctors discourse loosely and inconsistently upon that subject ; the high-flown flatterers of the Papal greatness, placing it in the Pope alone ; others, more moderate, in a General Council, some with, others without, the confirmation of the Pope ; and others, lastly, in a long chain of oral tradition from father to son ; a novel, and heretical hypothesis, repugnant to the common sense and experience of mankind. Thus are these infallible men divided in their opinions about the subject of their infallibility, a consideration that does not much advance the credibility of what they pretend to. But however — *oportet haberi* ; it must be found amongst them, though God knows where it is ; it is become the chief corner-stone of their Church, and therefore no parting from it, lest the whole fabric of the Trent superstructure tumble with it. There is, therefore, because there is no other way to account for her doctrine and worship, infallibility in the Church of Rome.

By which, I presume, they understand a power or ability inherent in the Pope, or a General Council, or both together, by the assistance of the Holy Ghost (especially in the true expounding of the Scriptures, which, without such infallible direction, are not certainly intelligible), so to decide and decree in all such cases, whether of faith or manners, brought before

them, as that they cannot possibly err or mistake in any of the definitions or determinations about them ; but that if they decree the belief of such and such articles, as for instance, purgatory, transubstantiation, or the like, to be absolutely necessary to salvation to-day, which were not so yesterday, they become really such, and are to be expressly believed as such upon pain of damnation. If they decree the worship of images, contrary to the express words of the second Commandment ; communion in one kind, contrary to our Lord's institution ; prayers in an unknown tongue, point-blank against the injunction of St. Paul, or the like ; they are nevertheless to be believed to have been influenced in all these their decrees, by the infallible guidance and conduct of the Holy Spirit ; and to which definitive sentences of theirs, all Christians are consequently bound to submit their assent, without any farther reason of their so doing, than the inerrability of those who pronounce them.

This then, is the conclusion to be inferred from those texts which they of the Romish communion allege for the infallibility of their Church ; and which we must be mindful to carry along with us in the particular examination of their Scripture-proofs.

But before I enter upon that province, it seems obvious and necessary to me to make two or three reflections, relating particularly to the matter in hand, the proof of this pretended infallibility from Scripture.

And the first is this, that it utterly vacates the usefulness and necessity of any Scripture, or written word at all. For, if the Scriptures have no determinate and orthodox meaning in them, till their Church, by Divine inspiration, fixes one upon them, to what purpose was it to commit the Divine will to writing ? For God might as well have constantly revealed his will to their Popes or Councils, without any writing at all, as be obliged still to reveal the true sense and meaning of that writing ; as he must be, if, according to them, it be only an unsensed character, whose meaning cannot be understood without such an infallible and inspired expositor. Which, in good earnest, is no better than downright enthusiasm ; and not so plausible as that of the Quaker, who pretends, without the dead letter of the Scripture, to be governed by the spirit of the body, or their general assembly ; a plain indication of the genius that acts those deluded people.

The second is, that notorious begging of the question, which they commit in proving their infallibility from the Scriptures. For, to any one who shall ask them, how they know the infallibility of their Church to be either positively asserted in, or by good consequence deducible from, such a text of Scripture? They can, according to their principles, give no other answer than this, that their Church so expounds it; being bound to believe not only as their Church believes, but for no other reason than that she believes so: if asked again, why they look upon such exposition as sufficient ground for their belief? They can give no other answer, than that their Church is infallible; which is to beg the question. For, if they say, they therefore believe the Church's exposition, because it is agreeable to their reason: they then make that heretical principle of reason, the foundation of their belief of this article. If, because the Fathers so expound such texts; I answer, it is absolutely false; there being not one Father of the Church, two or three of their own Popes only excepted, who make the least inference or remark that looks that way, upon any of the texts they produce upon this occasion. So that we must still, by their principles, run round in a ring, and without the least advance, end where we started. All which amounts, I think, to a sufficient prejudice against their proofs of this position, from the testimonies of Scripture.

Thirdly, I would have it observed, how preposterous a method it is, for men ultimately to resolve their faith into that, and not rather into the Scripture, which they themselves are forced to fetch from the pretended testimony of Scripture. For, if the reason of their belief of an infallible judge is founded on the attestation of Scripture, why not also the reason of their belief of every other article of their faith; unless indeed, that be more plainly and explicitly revealed therein than any other doctrine; which yet, I think, they will not assert. And therefore,

Fourthly, and lastly, We cannot but remark, that the Scripture-proofs they produce for so primary and fundamental an article of their faith, ought to carry along with them the greatest evidence and conviction.

But how they answer that character, we come now to consider.

They allege, I know, several prophecies of the Old Testament to this purpose, but such as serve only to expose the weakness of the cause in whose defence they are produced,

and which need no other confutation than a bare recital of them.

"Thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city," (Isa. i. 26.) "Through thee shall no more pass any that is uncircumcised or unclean" (ch. lii. 1), says the prophet Isaiah, speaking of Sion and Jerusalem, and the people of the Jews after their conversion; and therefore the Church of Rome is infallible in all her conciliary definitions. What prospective clear enough to see from the premises to the conclusion? "Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no spot in thee," says the mystical book of the Canticles (chap. iv. 7); therefore again, the Church of Rome cannot err. Lord, what outrages to common sense will not a desperate cause drive men upon! And in fine, whatsoever is prophesied concerning Mount Sion and Jerusalem, and the nation of the Jews after conversion (and what would for the most part as rationally conclude for impeccability, as infallibility in the Church), is greedily laid hold on to countenance this extravagant position. But whosoever shall desire more particular satisfaction in relation to the texts they allege out of the Old Testament, may have recourse to the additional discourses of the judicious Mr. Chillingworth, printed in quarto, in the year 1687. I shall confine myself to those they produce out of the New.

And because all or most of them are alleged on this behalf by the author of the Guide in Controversies, and made the foundation of that celebrated, heavy, tautological book, I shall choose, the rather, to have a particular regard to his management of them; which will carry this collateral advantage along with it, that if it appear they by no means prove that for which he produced them, his book, which is built upon them, must of course fall to the ground.

The first I shall mention, is that renowned place in the 16th of St. Matthew, and the 18th verse; where our blessed Lord, upon St. Peter's confessing Him to be Christ the Son of the living God, tells him, that "he was Peter, and upon this rock he would build his Church, and the gates of hell should not prevail against it."

A pregnant place this indeed, which is big with a Pope and a General Council too; for from hence they infer both the supremacy of the one, and the infallibility of the other: "For by *Petra*," says the Guide, "are meant the clergy, assembled in Council," as his whole book afterwards explains it,* "by

whom, and upon whom the Church is built," says he (as if men used to build upon themselves), and against whom the gates of hell are here said not to be able to prevail; and who shall therefore be infallible in all their determinations of faith and manners; for that is the point to be proved.

Now in answer to this: First, The reading of *Petra* for *Petra*, or *rocks* for *rock*, is a forced falsification of the text, contrived on purpose to countenance his darling hypothesis of the infallibility of the aggregate body of Councils.

Secondly, Granting the clergy of every age to be here meant by the metaphorical expression of a rock, which yet must needs grate upon intelligent ears, why the clergy in communion with the see of Rome only?

Thirdly, By the word *Petra* or *rock*, the Fathers generally understand, not a person, or persons, but a thing, viz. that faith which Peter here made confession of, as is notoriously known; ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ, οὐκ εἶπεν ἐπὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ, "upon this rock," says St. Chrysostom, "he said not upon Peter" (much less upon any of his successors, and less than that, upon any particular body of the clergy, as is the clergy of the Church of Rome); the change of the word, as the same Father proceeds to remark, being a sensible indication that the passage is to be understood of a thing, the truth he confessed, and not of a person, or persons; for what can be more absurdly preposterous than to say, that the Church in every age is to be built upon the clergy, and those many times very unskilful in their profession (which is no better than to make the workmen the foundation of the building), and not rather upon the truths of the Gospel delivered once for all unto the saints; which truths were antecedent to the constitution of the Christian Church, and all its clergy, excepting only its great High Priest, and prime foundation; and by the profession whereof every Church, and its clergy, are to be tried and known, whether they are of God or no; ἡ γὰρ ἀλήθειά ἐστι τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ σῦλος καὶ ἰδραίωμα,* "for the truth is the pillar and ground of the Church," says the excellent Chrysostom: and "the Creed," says St. Austin to the Catechumens (which contains a summary of the fundamental truths of Christianity, and which I cannot understand why all parties should call "fundamental" unless they looked upon them as the foundation of the Christian Church), "is the foundation of the Catholic faith, upon

* 1 Tim. iii. 15.

which the fabric of the Church arose, being built up by the hands of the Apostles and Prophets.

Fourthly, Therefore this place speaks only of the perpetual duration of the Church universal, as to necessary faith and practice, not of any particular body or communion of it; many of which, and those once the most celebrated, have totally fallen off from the faith, and become no more Churches. Let no particular Church therefore be high-minded, but fear; for we know to whom it was said, even to the Roman Christians themselves; that, "if they continued not in the right faith, and in the goodness of God" (that goodness which called them to the light of the Gospel), "they also should be cut off,"* as well as the Jews; and which, by the way, implies, I hope, a possibility at least, even of a final apostasy of that Church from the faith, incompatible with the pretence of a continued infallible conduct of God's Holy Spirit in all her conciliary definitions. But,

Fifthly, The vanity of this pretence will farther appear from that other phrase in the text, "the gates of hell," which to this day have not been able to prevail against the profession of faith here made by St. Peter, though it is certain they did for some time against his person; as particularly in his unbelief of those two great articles of our faith, the death and resurrection of our Lord (and for which he brands him with the name of Satan himself in that very chapter,† wherein he is supposed to have made this promise personal to him); and, secondly, afterwards in the denial of his Master.

But farther, sixthly, This expression of "the gates of hell," importing not heresy or corrupt opinions only, but all the stratagems and attempts of men and devils for the subversion of the Gospel, whether by clandestine frauds, or open persecutions, as Theophylact;‡ and to which, others very properly add the powers of the grave and death: they may as rationally from this place infer an earthly omnipotent judge to secure the Church from the frequently too powerful assaults of her adversaries; or a visible immortal judge to defend her against the powers of the grave, as a visible infallible judge to guard her against error in opinion; which can never be proved necessary in opposition to the gates of hell, so far as they relate to corrupt opinions only, unless it be first made appear that the

* Rom. xi. 20, 22.

† Matth. xvi. 21, 22, 23.

‡ Vide Grot. in loc. [vol. 2. p. 162. col. 2. Lond. 1679.]

Divine wisdom can by no other ordinary means preserve his Church universal (that is, some part or other of it), from dangerous and destructive error; which yet he did in the first ages of the Church, enabling her champions by the strength of a plain standing rule (for that was their weapon all along), without the least dream of an infallible interpreter of it, to subdue those heresies that opposed her, and to preserve her faith pure and uncorrupt.

Sum we now up the premises, and add the conclusion. Our Saviour here, upon St. Peter's ready confession of one prime article of our Christian faith, *viz.* "That he was Christ the Son of the living God," tells him that this (and others of the like momentous importance included in it) shall be the basis upon which, by the use of the ministry, he will build up the edifice of his Church; adding moreover, that though the wit, malice, and power of men and devils, shall be engaged in the utter extirpation of this faith out of the world, yet there shall never be wanting to the world's end, those who shall heartily and sincerely profess it; after which comes the inference lagging so far behind, a man can scarce see from the one to the other: "Therefore the Church of Rome in PARTICULAR is infallible, in all the definitions concerning faith or manners, that she shall ever make." *Quidlibet ex quolibet!* But of this text see before, page 9, &c.

A second place from which they infer the infallibility of the Church, *i. e.* in their assuming language, their own Church, is that in St. Matth. xviii. 17: "But if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican." Therefore say they, the decrees of the Church, which are to be obeyed upon so severe a penalty, must needs be infallible. But I answer,

First, That it is plain beyond contradiction, to any one who has not renounced his eyes and his reason, that our Saviour here speaks of the discipline, not doctrine, to be observed in particular Churches, and that particularly in relation to the private injuries and offences which one Christian might be guilty of towards another, and not with regard to any error or heresy, as is abundantly evident from the whole tenor of the context: for our Lord here tells his followers, that if, after a private admonition (ver. 15), and if that would not do, before two or three witnesses (ver. 16), one who is a brother (that is a Christian) should not repent of an injury or trespass against his brother, they should then publish his fault to the Church

or congregation of believers, of which he was a member ; or, as Chrysostom and Theophylact expound it, to the governors of the Church ; conformable to the discipline of the Jews, amongst whom the elders and rulers of the synagogue were solely invested with the power of excommunication ; whose censures and reprehensions, if he should proceed to despise likewise, they should then look no more upon him as a member of their communion, but as one quite cut off from it, and whose conversation was to be avoided, as heathens and publicans were by the Jews. And if this makes a Church infallible, it does, in the second place, make any particular Church so ; and that, thirdly, not in doctrine, but discipline, that part of it especially, which is exercised in censuring obstinate offenders, to which this place more immediately relates. But none, I presume, will say, that a Church may not err in her sentences of this kind.

A third text they produce in favour of infallibility, is our Saviour's promise in the 20th verse of the same chapter, that "where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is in the midst of them." From whence they thus argue, *à majori ad majus* ;* that if, when a few ecclesiastical judges are met together in the name of Christ, for the ending of private differences betwixt one Christian and another, he has promised to be in the midst of them (referring, as the Guide doth, this verse to the 17th and 18th preceding), how much more may we presume of his presence in a general assembly of ecclesiastical judges, or bishops, convened about matters of a higher importance, articles of faith, and the way to salvation ?

To which I answer, 1. That these words do not relate to the 17th and 18th verses of this chapter ;† where yet the power of binding and loosing in the case of private offences, is not tied up to the Church, or its governors, but given to the injured party likewise, and that for these reasons :

First, Because this exposition is extremely forced and unnatural, as will appear to any one who shall examine the several glosses of those expositors who abet it ; and the Jesuit Maldonatus himself confesses, that at first sight there appears no connexion betwixt them ; and I am sure he has not mended the matter upon his second thoughts.

* Maldonat. in loc.

† See Origen. [vol. 3. p. 615. Par. 1740.] Aug. de verbo Dom. homil. 15 [Serm. 83. vol. 5. p. 447. Par. 1683.] Theophyl. in loc. [vol. 1. p. 96. Venet. 1754.]

Secondly, Because the Fathers, Hilary (Canon 18), Chrysostom, Jerome and Theophylact interpret them of that concord and mutual agreement we ought always to retain, in opposition to those injuries and animosities occasioned by them, spoke of from the 15th to the 19th verse, which were a good argument to those I have to deal with, unless they could out-poll me in testimonies of this kind, though they had not reason on their side, which yet I think they have. For,

Thirdly, Here is nothing said in the whole chapter before, concerning agreement in supplications and prayers, to which these words in the 19th and 20th verse, which speak expressly of it, can be referred; and it seems natural enough, that our blessed Lord, having spoken against giving of offences, from the 6th to the 15th verse, and from thence to the 19th, of the behaviour of those who received them; should, in the next place, as Theophylact speaks, *συνάγειν ἡμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἀγάπην*, lead us on to charity and mutual concord, especially in our prayers, and then our adversaries may, with equal reason, infer the infallibility of their Church in all her decrees, from that place in St. John's Gospel, where our Saviour tells his disciples, that whatsoever they shall ask in his name, that he will do (John xiv. 13, 14); or from that of St. James, where he assures us, that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (chap. v. 16); which yet would be pretty wild inferences. But I answer,

2. That, supposing for once, not granting, these words in the 19th and 20th verses, to refer to the preceding in the 17th and 18th; as the *anything* his disciples should ask and it be granted them, in the 19th verse, must, of necessity, be confined to things good and lawful, and for good and lawful ends: for, as it follows in the 20th verse, he has promised to be in the midst of such ecclesiastical judges, since they will have it so, only when two or three of them are gathered together in his name; so by parity of reason, the determinations in matters of faith and manners, whose authority they would hence establish, must be only such as are made in his name too, which they can never be, that are contradictory to his word; so that if they would prove anything from hence, they must still, in the first place, be put upon that trial by Scripture, which they care not to engage in; and lastly, if their inference from this place, understood in their own sense, hold good for General Councils, it will also prove the infallibility of national or provincial synods, and those of any other Church, as well as of

the Roman, when convened upon the same occasions: which will not square with their hypothesis. For it is pitiful cant, and begging of the question, to tell us, as yet they are not ashamed to do, that no synod can meet in the name of Christ, which is not convened by the Pope's authority. And therefore, whereas Maldonatus informs us, that there are several (Roman) Catholics, who think this text makes nothing for them, and yet are ingenious men; I am perfectly of his mind; and that they are much more so too than those who think it does.

Lastly, If from our Saviour's saying, He will be in the midst of two or three Christians met for the decision of private differences amongst their brethren, they can justly infer the infallibility of their Councils; then likewise did our Saviour by those words make such two or three infallible in their determinations likewise, which is absurd.

A fourth argument for the infallibility of their Church, is fetched from those words of our Saviour in St. Matthew xxiii. the 1st and 2nd verses: "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses's seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do." This the Misrepresenter thought fit, after his way, to harangue upon, in his character of infallibility in the Church, though the Guide has more judiciously passed it by. The force of the argument, such as it is, lies in this, that our Saviour, notwithstanding the great corruptions in the Jewish Church, here commands an unlimited implicit obedience to the dictates of those whose office it was to interpret the law, which obedience must suppose them infallible in their expositions; and therefore much more does he require such a submission to be yielded to the doctors of the Christian Church (their own exclusively of all others), "to which the promises of a continual and uninterrupted assistance are made surer than ever they were to the Jewish Church."* Not here to dwell upon this author's confounding the whole Christian Church with that of Rome, and his jumbling assistance, authority, and infallibility together, things distant enough in their own natures, and the two former whereof do by no means infer the latter:

I answer, first, that the principles of common reason teach us, that words of an universal extent are of necessity to be limited and bound up according to the nature of the subject matter to which they relate: and that,

* See Misrepresent. p. 39.

Secondly, Their own, and other authors, whose expositions they are obliged to receive, have accordingly interpreted them. St. Chrysostom* expounds them of things commanded by the law of Moses; and those only of a moral nature too. "They sat well in Moses' chair," says Origen,† "who did rightly and rationally interpret the law of Moses;" which supposes, that others did, in his opinion, misinterpret it.

St. Austin, speaking of this place, says,‡ "God therefore teaches by them (the pastors of his Church), but if they will teach doctrines of their own, do not hear them, do not do them." *Per Cathedram Doctrinam Legis ostendit*, says Jerome.§ "He enjoins their obedience to all the commands of the law," saith Hilary.|| "Where our Saviour says, 'Whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do:' our obedience is commanded to be yielded to wicked prelates in all their good injunctions," saith Isidore.¶ Which supposes him of opinion that they might enjoin what was bad. Theophylact** likewise takes it for granted, that men in Moses' chair may teach contrary to the law. Maldonate†† himself confesses, that our Saviour speaks, "not of their own, but of the doctrine of the law of Moses:" And, "not all their doctrines," saith Ferus, "but as far as they were conformable to the law." And is it not very pleasant then for this haranguer in controversy‡‡ to come and tell us, that our Saviour in this place commands a blind obedience "to those who had the superiority," as he terms it, "without doubting of the reasonableness of their commands," when every one acknowledges there was a standing law or rule, according to which they were to speak, and from which they might, and frequently did swerve? For,

Thirdly, How else will he justify our Saviour's accusation of them in the 15th of St. Matthew, that "they transgressed and made of no effect the commandment of God by their tradition," blending and confounding it with the commandments of men, by which "they worshipped Him in vain?" (ver. 3, 6, 9.) Or why did he bid his disciples, in the 16th chapter of that evangelist, "beware of their doctrine," if they were

* Homil. 73. in Mat. [vol. 7. p. 701. Par. 1727.] vid. Caten. gr. in loc.

† Orig. in loc. [ut supra, p. 836.]

‡ Tract. 46. in Johan. [vol. 3. par. 2. p. 604. Par. 1680.]

§ Hieron. in loc. [vol. 7. p. 182. Veron. 1737.] || Hilary. Canon. 24.

¶ Isidor. Hispal. in Epist. Claudio Duci.

** Theophyl. in loc. [ut supra, p. 122.]

†† Maldon. in loc.

‡‡ See Misrepresent. p. 39.

such excellent infallible guides? So that if our Saviour's reasonings against these Jewish doctors hold good, those of the Romish doctors in their behalf cannot. And I must confess myself something at a loss how to reconcile the Representer to himself, when he tells us, that "though all things touching religion and virtue were in a manner run to decay in our Saviour's time, both in priests and people, yet the Jewish Church stood firm in the delivery of truth;" unless truth of doctrine have no relation to religion; unless the Church consists of other members besides priests and people; and thirdly, unless a thing may be said to be almost totally decayed, and yet stand very firm and entire. But perhaps some traditionary doctors think themselves obliged to defend their predecessors in this way at all adventures.

The last place I meet with, alleged out of St. Matthew's Gospel, upon this behalf, are our Saviour's concluding words to his disciples, just upon his ascension: "And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," (Matth. xxviii. 20.)* This the infallible Guide only points to, as to several others, but thought not fit to exercise his arguing talent upon it, perhaps, because he thought it would not bear it. And indeed, I shall need do little more, than briefly paraphrase the text, to shew how impertinently it is produced for infallibility in their Church.

Our blessed Saviour then having, after his resurrection, appeared to his eleven disciples in the mountain in Galilee (Matth. xxviii. 16), where he had by Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, appointed them to meet him, (ver. 10.)† considering the arduous and important employment these poor honest men were to undertake, to which no abilities, purely human, could ever be commensurate, tells them, for their comfort and support, that he,‡ under whose banner they were to fight the good fight, had "now all power given him in heaven and in earth" (ver. 18),§ upon the strength whereof ("Go ye, therefore," ver. 19), he now gives them their final commission to act in his name, assuring them for their farther encouragement, that he (he who had already overcome the world, the grave, and death itself) would be with them (and all other his faithful disciples hereafter), even unto the end of the world:||

* Pag. 4.

† Theophyl. in loc. [Ibid. p. 166.] Chrys. Homil. 9. [Homil. 91. Ibid. p. 841.] ‡ Chrys. ibid. Theophyl. ibid. § Maldonat. in loc.

|| Chrys. et Theoph. ibid.

be with them, endowing them with a noble and heroic *παρρησία*, or boldness of mind, necessary to their present undertaking; as he did the prophets of old (says St. Chrysostom),* Jeremy for instance, who thinking himself inadequate to the office, God bade him "not be afraid of their faces, for he would be with him to deliver him" (Jerem. i. 6, 8), inspiring them with extemporary apologies to the magistrates and rulers of the earth;† strengthening and supporting them under their several trials; for "as the sufferings of Christ abounded in them, so (saith St. Paul) their consolation also abounded by him."‡ Or, lastly, as in the parallel place of St. Mark's Gospel, "working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." So that the words are properly, and in their primary intention, only a promise of general assistance to the Apostles (and in them to all other faithful pastors of his Church upon the like occasions), under the difficulties and dangers they were to struggle with in the discharge of their ministerial office; and they who extend them farther, do violence to the words. But suppose for once they were meant of a peculiar direction and assistance in relation to the finding out and teaching of truth: how come they, first, to relate to the Church of Rome only? Was our Lord with no other Apostles and their successors, but only with St. Peter and his? 2. Why may not a man as well reject and resist this sort of assistance, as well as any other influences of his grace? And if so, then no argument from this text, nor the preceding, wherein Christ is said to be "in the midst of two or three gathered in his name," will be conclusive. 3. Let them shew that Christ by these words has promised to secure the future ages of the Church from any other than damnable and destructive errors. And, 4. Why the words do not prove any particular bishop or priest, duly sent to teach and baptize, as infallible as a Pope, or a Council? For these words, "I am with you, &c." were spoke to them in that capacity, and not considered as a Council.

I shall only add this farther remark upon the place; that they to whom these great supports were promised, were at the same time enjoined to teach the people to observe those things only which he, their Lord and Master, had commanded them; which they would do well to reconcile with the practice

* Chrysost. Hom. 91. in Matth. [Ibid.] See likewise Ezekiel 3. 8, 9.

† Matth. x. 19, 20. See the History of the Acts. ‡ 2 Cor. i. 5.

of their own Church, who coin, at their pleasure, new articles of faith; and some of those directly contrary to what he has expressly, both by Himself and Apostles, commanded.

After having thus rallied up and repelled all the scattered forces they pretend to out of St. Matthew's Gospel, let us see in the next place what assistance that of St. Luke affords them; which alas is very small, being confined to two texts only, and those very remote to their purpose, as will presently appear.

The first of them is in Luke x. 16, where our Saviour tells the seventy disciples, whom he "sent before his face into every city and place where he himself should come" (ver. 1), that "he who heard them, heard him likewise;" who being infallible, they must consequently be so too; and therefore the clergy of the Romish communion inerrable in all their conciliary decrees. What a gulf is here betwixt the premises and the conclusion! And what medium can even infallibility itself devise, to make good the inference? For, first, what St. Luke here expresses by "hearing" of the seventy disciples, St. Matthew* and St. John express by a civil and hospitable "reception" of them. And so likewise does St. Luke explain himself in the very same chapter: "Into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you," ver. 8; "but into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same," &c. ver 10. But,

Secondly, Confine this reception to the hearing or entertainment of their doctrine only; as our Saviour often tells us,† "that they who heard him, heard likewise him that sent him;" because he said no more than what his Father gave him in commission: so likewise, by parity of reason, do they only hear Christ, who hear the pastors of his Church, when they teach only what he has commanded them;‡ which though it render not a guide infallible, which excludes all possibility of mistake, yet secures every individual clergyman, so far forth as he sticks to that rule, as much from error, as it does the Pope himself at the head of a General Council. And truly, if an unlimited infallibility were any way deducible from this text, individual guides, and those of any other communion,

* Matth. x. 40, compared with ver. 41, 42. John xiii. 20.

† John xiv. 10, 24. John viii. 28, &c.

‡ Matth. xxviii. 20.

as well as of the Roman, or two in conjunction at the most, have the most easy and natural pretence to it ; for the seventy disciples, from whose privilege they would prove it, were so, not jointly considered in a body, but as they were distinctly and separately sent out, "by two and two,"* into different quarters of Judea. And,

Thirdly, That these seventy were accordingly bound up to the delivery of the doctrine, and that the main fundamental doctrine of their Lord and Master, is plain from the context ; for the truth they were to teach was this : That "the kingdom of God (or the Messiah) was come nigh unto the Jews" (ver. 9, 11,) (which they were empowered likewise to establish with signs following, ver. 9, 17) ; and therefore the inference can reach only so far, and no farther.

Fourthly, What parity is there betwixt the necessity of infallibly inspired guides, as is the case of the twelve Apostles, and the seventy disciples, in the infancy of revealed doctrine, before the canon or rule of it is established and completed, and afterwards in succeeding ages ? which is as gross enthusiasm as a man would desire an adversary to be guilty of.

The second, and last text that I find produced out of St. Luke, is in the 22nd chapter and the 32nd verse, where our Saviour says to St. Peter, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not ; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."† This place Bellarmine is very busy with, to make it speak for the personal infallibility of the Pope ; and what is more absurd, the Guide, the unreasonable Guide,‡ refers to it for his contrary hypothesis of the inerrability of Councils. So that if a man be but once on the infallible side, any text will prove just what he pleases ; and the truth is, this proves the two different opinions much alike ; that is, just nothing at all. For the former clause of the text upon which the greatest stress is laid, is so far from presenting us with any grace or favour peculiar to St. Peter, as Bellarmine would have it, that it is an argument of his greater weakness and imperfection, rather than of any peculiar privilege or prerogative conferred upon him.

For, first, It is evident from the 31st verse of this chapter, Satan's desire of sifting, *i. e.* tempting, them all, and from the parallel places of St. Matthew's § and St. Mark's Gospel,

* Luke x. 1.

† De Rom. Pont. l. 4. c. 3.

‡ Cap. 1.

§ Matth. xxvi. 31. Mark xiv. 27.

where it is said, they should be "all offended" because of him, that he actually interceded for them all: as the editor of the *Life of Christ*,* printed at Oxford, a very honest man, confesses an intercession of the same nature, and to the same effect with that which he made for them all, just before his Passion, recorded in the 17th of St. John; † "I have declared thy Name unto them," ver. 6; "Holy Father, keep them through thine own Name," ver. 11; "and sanctify them through thy truth," ver. 17. And after this, if any one wants to know why our Saviour makes particular mention of St. Peter, in the intercession wherein all the Apostles were jointly concerned; I shall return him that excellent and pertinent answer of St. Chrysostom, upon the very same objection: ‡ "Why, if Satan desired to sift them all, did not our Lord say, I have prayed for you all? Why, he addressed himself to him, reflecting upon him, and shewing that his fall would be greater than that of any of the other Apostles." *καταστέλλων ὅτι θρασύτερος ἦν*, says Theophylact, "taking him down," as our own idiom appositely renders it, because he was a little too confident, to wit, of his own steadiness and perseverance. And therefore, the true reason why our Saviour took such particular care that St. Peter's faith should not fail, *i. e.* should not utterly perish and fall away, § was not any privilege or pre-eminence designed him above the other Apostles, but his foresight of those great temptations he would be obnoxious to, and the extreme danger he would be in thereupon, of utterly deserting him. All which is abundantly confirmed by our Saviour's acquainting him with his future denial of him (Luke xxii. 34), immediately after he had told him of his intercession for him (ver. 32); notwithstanding his forward promise of going with him even into prison, and to death itself (ver. 33). And what is all this to the infallibility of the Pope? What connection betwixt a prayer upon occasion of St. Peter's frailty, and the inerrability of his successors? Just about as much as betwixt two contrary propositions. Besides, that St. Peter's denial of his Master being no more than practical,

* 'Ο δειθεις μὴ ἐκλείπειν τὴν πίστιν τῶν Ἀποστόλων. Ignat. Ep. ad Smyrnenses. [Ep. Interpol. p. 150. Lips. 1699.]

† Part 2. Parag. 1.

‡ 26 Homil. in Mat. [Homil. in Mat. 26. *ibid.* p. 785.] Caten. gr. in Lucam.

§ Chrys. in Mat. 26. [*Ibid.*] Caten. gr. in Lucam—μὴ ἐκλείπῃ εἰς τὸ παντελὲς. Theophyl. in loc. [ut supra, p. 471.]

as I may call it, and as all their own authors grant, extorted from him through fear ; not the speculative result of his conscience and judgment (for, doubtless, he did not fall into the damnable error of disbelieving Christ to be the Messias), our Saviour consequently prayed for the non-failure of his practical, not of his doctrinal faith ; that is, not that he might always hold the truth, which he did whilst he denied it, but that he might, after his apprehensions of danger were over, confess and assert it again. So that if this text and prayer were granted to reach the Popes, which it was never intended for, it should rather secure them against the prevalency of fears over their wills in times of temptation, than against error or heresy in their understandings, for of that it speaks not at all.

But perhaps then the mystery is couched in the latter part of the text in these words, "When thou art converted," *i. e.** hast repented of thy denial of me, "strengthen thy brethren ; confirm and establish the diffident and wavering Christian ; make me this return of my assistance to thee ; for if thou hadst not been supported by my care and providence, thou couldst never have held out against the assaults of the devil ; considering therefore thy own case, be favourable to others, aiding and shewing humanity towards them ;" as the excellent Chrysostom† paraphrastically explains the words. And if such a friendly and Christian office as this cannot be performed without infallibility in the undertaker, as the fierce Maldonate‡ profoundly argues upon that place, I see not why every parish priest, every Christian, nay, every heretic, is not capable of being as infallible as the Pope himself ; for even we, I hope, are most of us able to strengthen and confirm our brethren, when, by the clandestine suggestions of Romish emissaries, they begin to waver and stagger in the profession of their faith. Proceed we now from the Gospel of St. Luke to that of St. John, where, in the first place, we are assaulted with the promise of our Saviour to his disciples, in chap. xiv. 16. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." For ever, says the Guide, *i. e.* "both with the Apostles and their successors ;"§ who shall therefore be infallible as they

* Ambros. in Ps. 43. Theophyl. in loc. [Ibid.]

† Homil. in Mat. 26. [Ibid.] Catén. gr. in Lucam.

‡ Quomodo firmare possunt, si errare possunt ?

§ Cap. 1.

were. The occasion and coherence of the words with the preceding context, will give light to their meaning. The disciples of our blessed Lord being sensibly touched, as appears from the first verse of this chapter,* with the news that some of them should betray him, Peter himself deny him,† and he die, and leave them destitute of the support and conduct which his presence had afforded them, and which was still in an extraordinary measure requisite for them who had so many hardships and difficulties to encounter : he endeavours in this chapter to ‡ allay that trouble and disquiet of mind they laboured under, as by several other considerations in the former part of it, so particularly by this in the 16th verse, that though he went from them to his Father, yet he would certainly prevail with him to substitute one who should abundantly supply the place of that Comforter§ he had been to, or Advocate for them, and who should tarry with them, not for the space of a few years only,|| as he had done upon earth, but continue with them as long as they lived. An exposition so easy and natural, and withal so well attested, that though it sufficiently overthrows the argument of the Guide, and indeed, any other infallible cavil that can with tolerable colour be made from this place ; yet I think myself obliged to speak a little more particularly to it.

First, then, I observe,¶ that in this place here is no promise made that any way relates to truth of doctrine, but of the Holy Spirit only under the peculiar consideration of a *παράκλητος*, a Comforter, or Advocate (as Isidore** with several others, not Assistant, as the Guide loosely renders it, to countenance his hypothesis), one who should strengthen and support them under the pressure of their afflictions, plead their cause with the world (Matth. x. 20), as he would do with his Father, help their infirmities in their prayers and supplications (Rom. viii. 26), reprove and convince their adversaries (John xvi. 8, &c.) and the like ; all which comforts and assistances

* Chap. xiii. 21.

† Chap. xiii. 36. Cyril. Alex. in v. 1. [vol. 4. p. 760. Lutet. 1678.]

‡ Hoc ait *παραμυθούμενος*, &c. comforting them, Chrysost. in loc. [Ibid. vol. 8. p. 440.]

§ Another Comforter, *ἄλλον ὡς ἐμέ*. Chrysost. in loc. [Ibid. p. 439.]

|| So Theophyl in loc. [Ibid. p. 703.] So Maldonate. So Ferus.

¶ Hebræis est *εἰς αἰῶνα*, Grot. in loc. [ut supra, p. 547. col. 1.] *οὐκ ἀφήσιν ὑμᾶς*, says Chrysostom. [Ibid. p. 440.]

** Isidor. Hispal. l. 7. Origen. c. 2. [c. 3. p. 56. Colon. Agr. 1617.] See 1 Joh. 2. 1.

the circumstances of the Apostles did in a peculiar and extraordinary manner require, and which we doubt not, but will, in what measure the Divine goodness shall think fit, be still continued down, not only to their successors, if this were all the Guide meant by his inference, but to any one else who shall, as they did, conscientiously assert the cause, and suffer for the testimony of Jesus.

And what now, in the second place, is this to infallibility? Is every one with whom the Comforter abides, or, what is the same thing, who enjoys the comfortable influences of the Holy Spirit, infallible? No, unless we will admit of as many inerrable guides as there are pious and good Christians in the world.

But, thirdly, supposing, not granting, that the words contained any promise of infallibility; how come St. Peter's successors (to call them so for once) to be interested in it exclusively to the successors of any of the other Apostles, to whom it was jointly and equally made with St. Peter?

And lastly, Let them take this along with them, that the promise concerns them only, "who love God and keep his commandments," as it is conditionally expressed in John xiv. 15th verse, which looks like a proviso against those numerous wicked Popes, acknowledged such by their own writers, and against several Councils too which we know of, who have been acted purely by pride, interest, and ambition, the fruits of the spirit of this world, with which the Spirit of God can no more abide, than light can with darkness, or contraries with one another.

Another text by which they would farther prove infallibility lodged in the Church, that is, their own forsooth, exclusive of all others, is the 26th verse of the same chapter, where our Saviour tells his disciples, that this same "Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in his name, shall teach them all things."

But that this place respects those only to whom it was immediately addressed, will appear: 1. From a true and genuine exposition of it; as indeed, all the strength of their arguments from Scripture, lies only in forced and disjointed misinterpretations of it: and, 2. From the reason of the thing.

1. The occasion and meaning of the words is purely this. The disciples of our blessed Lord, notwithstanding the long and familiar conversation they had with him, were yet so slow of heart, as he expresses himself upon this very occasion after his resurrection,* to believe and understand the doctrines he

* Luke xxiv. 25.

had inculcated to them,* that they doubted of many things he said, and could not comprehend a great many more, as is most strongly evident from the last chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, in the 25th, &c., 32d, and 45th verses, as likewise from the 5th, 7th, 11th, and 22d verses of this very chapter we are now upon, to spare farther instances.† To remove which melancholy consideration, that might otherwise have had an ill effect upon them, he tells them to this purpose, that though they did not as yet clearly comprehend "those things which he had spoken unto them whilst he was present amongst them" (John xiv. 25), yet that "the Holy Ghost, whom the Father should send them, would teach them,"‡ i. e. farther reveal and explain, and confirm them in the true meaning and certainty of all those things wherein he had before instructed them; or, as the Evangelist in the subsequent words comments upon himself, "bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them;" and that therefore, as it is expressed in the next verse, "they should not trouble their hearts, nor be afraid," because of his departure, for that the Holy Ghost, whom (says Chrysostom§ and Theophylact) he so often calls Comforter, by reason of the great anxieties they were in, should enlighten their understandings, and establish them in the truth. So that, in the second place, from the words thus explained, common reason will inform us, that they respect only those to whom they were immediately spoken, who being to convey the truths of the Gospel down to future generations, which they did not as yet fully understand, stood in need of an extraordinary illumination and assistance from the Spirit, "to bring things to their remembrance" (theirs, and not their successors, who having yet learned nothing, could forget nothing), and which must consequently cease, after having enabled them to deliver the canon of our faith, whether by Scripture separately, or in conjunction with original oral tradition (to take in their own hypothesis), unless indeed the Spirit did not in their days perfect his revelations, but left some farther discoveries of his mind to be made to the after-ages of the Church; which is rank and endless fanaticism.

And thus likewise are we to understand those words in John

* See Chrysost. Homil. 75. in Johan. [Ibid. p. 442.]

† Chrys. *ibid.*

‡ 'Αποκαλύπτειν Cyr. of Alex. explains it by. [Ut supra, p. 838.]

§ Chrysost. Homil. 77. [Homil. 75. *ibid.* p. 445.] Theophyl. in loc. [Ut supra, p. 707.]

xvi. 13, where our Saviour tells his disciples, that "when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide them into all truth;" another pretended proof of their infallibility. For our Lord having in this chapter acquainted them with the tribulations they must suffer for his sake (ver. 2), as likewise with his departure (ver. 5); adds (ver. 6), that because of these things "sorrow had filled their hearts;" whereupon he proceeds (ver. 7) to cherish and support them, as before, with the considerations of the advantages they would reap from the presence of the Comforter he would send, of whom, having spoke more particularly as far as ver. 12, he there tells them plainly, that "he had many things to say unto them," more ample discoveries of the nature of his kingdom to make, but that at present, by reason of the veil that was yet in some measure over their understandings, "they could not bear them;" but that when "the Spirit of truth" should come (the Spirit, not of the Old, but of the New Testament, as Chrysostom* and Theophylact ingeniously expound it, whose spiritual nature they were farther to be informed in), "he should guide them into all truth;" discover to them the present insignificancy of the Judaic rites and sacrifices, the necessity of the abolition of the whole Mosaic economy,† and the state of that spiritual kingdom he designed to establish in the world. All which things the Spirit should guide them into the knowledge of, because, as it follows in the next words, "he should not speak of himself, but whatsoever he heard, that only he should speak," *i. e.* nothing besides, nothing contrary to what our Saviour had taught before him: for as the excellent Chrysostom‡ descants upon the words; as our Saviour spoke not of himself, but what he received from his Father; so neither was the Holy Ghost to add any thing new of his own, but to teach only what was conformable to the precedent doctrine of our Saviour. So that that still, as now delivered down to us, by the inspiration of the Spirit, must be the rule by which, above all things, we are to measure whatsoever claims men lay to his infallible guidance and conduct (from which rule notwithstanding they most notoriously deviate, who are the boldest pretenders to his oracular inspirations, all utterly unnecessary), at least in the way of an ordinary and standing

* Chrys. [Ibid. p. 461.] et Theoph. in Johan. 14. 17. [Ibid. p. 703.]

† Origen. l. 2. advers. Celsum. [Ut supra, vol. 1. p. 387.] Cyril Alex. in loc. [Ut supra, p. 925.] See Acts 15. 28.

‡ Chrys. Homil. 77. in Johan. [Ibid. p. 460.] οὐδὲν ἐναντίον, οὐδὲν ἰδίον παρὰ τὰ ἐμά. sic Theoph. in loc. [Ibid.]

director, to the succeeding centuries of the Church, after the canon of our faith completed, sealed up, and once delivered to the saints, by the Apostles and Evangelists, the once for all inspired penmen of the New Testament, to whom alone these promises, and consequent assistances were necessary, and to whom alone therefore they extend. "Hold there," says the Guide, in his argument from these three texts of St. John's Gospel, "for then what would become of the nations, that after their times, were still to be instructed? What would become of them?" Why, they were to be instructed out of the inspired writings those left behind them. Ay, but what would become of them, "especially when any controversies should arise" (and upon this hinge turns the whole argument of that tedious book), "concerning the understanding of the Apostles' writings? which writings are misunderstandable, it seems, in things necessary; for St. Peter saith, in his time, the unlearned wrested them to their own destruction (2 Pet. iii. 16), that effect not following upon wresting things unnecessary: therefore that Assistant" (meaning the Holy Ghost), "needful not only to the Apostles in their writings, what he taught them; but to their successors also, in interpreting what they wrote."* The sum of all which is this, that the Scriptures are not plain in things necessary to the salvation of those, for whose salvation they were writ; and that therefore, there is still the same need of the direction of the Holy Ghost to interpret them aright, as there was at first to pen and indite them. In answer to this, so far only as shall not carry me beyond my first design. First, then (to pass by those dishonourable reflections hereby cast upon the Scriptures, and consequently upon God himself, the author of them), what service could the continuance of the inspirations of the Holy Ghost do the Apostles' successors in the interpretation of Scripture, when it did themselves so very little as not to enable them to write plainly and intelligibly, even in matters necessary to the salvation of those for whose sakes they wrote, and whose salvation they thereby designed to advance? For, doubtless, that Holy Spirit was as clear and distinct then in his revelations of necessities, as since. If not, it must be said, that he improved, upon second thoughts, either in his will, or his power, to reveal and indite them more plainly than he did at first. The latter, I presume, they dare not affirm, and what reason can the wit of man assign of the former? But,

* C. 1. par. 7. pag. 5.

secondly, how does it appear from that text of St. Peter (2 Pet. iii. 16), that the Scriptures are not plain in things necessary?

For, first, is it not evidently there said, that the misinterpretations made of them were forced and unnatural, such as men wrested and extorted by perverse expositions of them?

Secondly, Were they not only the unlearned and unstable, the ignorant and wavering, and as Œcumenius * farther describes them, wicked and ungodly Christians, who thus did violence to some parts of the Scriptures?

And, thirdly, then will any man, unless as unlearned and unstable as they, affirm that nothing is plain which ignorant and perverse people may violently wrest to whatsoever sense and construction they please to put upon it? If so, then nothing under the sun can be made plain and intelligible, because every thing may be wrested, abused and eluded. I would desire to know if the wit of man can make any thing more plain and intelligible, than the humanity of Christ is in the Scripture? And yet I doubt not but the Guide has heard of those who denied it.

Fourthly, How shall infallibility in the Church prevent or remedy such misinterpretations now, when it could not in the days of the Apostles, whose infallibility was unquestionable? Every one knows the gross heresies that infested the Church, even in some of their days. And if St. Peter himself, in whose time the Guide acknowledges, idle extravagant men perverted the Scriptures, could not yet by his presence, discourses and authority, end the controversies they had raised; how shall one of his successors, or a council of bishops, &c. under him, falsely pretending to the guidance of the Spirit, do it by their arbitrary and unscriptural decisions?

Fifthly, This reasoning is altogether delusory and inconclusive, that whatsoever place of Scripture may be wrested to a man's destruction, must contain an article of faith or practice, absolutely necessary to salvation: I need but instance any where almost to refute it. What doctrine of necessary faith or practice does that saying of our Saviour, in Matth. x. 34, exhibit to us; "That he came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword?" And yet, should any man, wresting these words from the context and scope of the discourse, which is but too usual neither in expositions of Scripture, conceive of

* *Δυσνόητα δὲ λέγει ἃ καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἁσεβῶν φησὶν ἐνδιαστροφῶς ἐξαγγίλλεσθαι.* Œcumen. in loc. [p. 223. Francof. 1610.]

our Saviour as of a public disturber of the peace of human societies, and die in that opinion; or otherwise think himself obliged to practise accordingly. and become, thereupon, a public incendiary; I am apt to believe, that either of these wrestings would cost him his salvation. Again, what article is there of either necessary faith or practice expressed in these words of St. Paul, Rom. v. 20, "where sin abounded" (*viz.* by the law) "grace did much more abound" (*viz.* by Christ); and yet, it seems, there wanted not, those who wrested it to this destructive sense, that we should continue in sin, that grace might abound (Rom. vi. 1); and which is indeed, the instance, by which Œcumenius illustrates and explains this passage of St. Peter, concerning those who wrested some things in St. Paul's Epistles to their own destruction?

And, but to instance once more; they who can infer a blind and implicit obedience to all the doctrines of their teachers, from this place in one of St. Paul's Epistles, that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1 Cor. xiv. 32), as this unanswerable Guide,* out of either his great ignorance or wilful mistake, does, may very well wrest some things in his Epistles to their own destruction, if such teachers should not prove infallible; and yet this text contains nothing of necessary faith or manners in it: the plain meaning of it being only this, that the Spirit by which the divinely inspired preachers were acted in their extemporary discourses, as was frequent in the infancy of Christianity, did not operate upon them by any violent and irresistible impulse, as the diabolical spirit did upon his enthusiasts, but that they could speak or hold their tongues at their pleasure. Of this text see before, vol. iv. page 281, &c.

But perhaps I have dwelt longer already upon the Guide, than his fallacious reasoning deserves. I pass on therefore to the next book in order, the Acts of the holy Apostles; where we find, that from that expression in the letter of the Apostolic synod to the Gentile converts, about retaining and rejecting the Mosaic observances, "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us" (Acts xv. 28), they infer the like presidency of the same Holy Spirit in all their General Councils. But for what reason? I can find none assigned. The Representer indeed, says, he doubts not of it; but his presumption is no argument with us; and what has been already said upon the

* Cap. 1. p. 7.

foregoing texts of St. John's Gospel, the Spirit's guiding them into all truth, &c. to which, without doubt, the Apostles had an eye in this particular expression, is sufficient to limit this, as well as the promises upon which it is built, to their determinations only; not that we question the assistance of the Holy Spirit, which yet is far enough from infallibility to any of those Councils, who, in godly sincerity, shall in after-ages determine according to the rule they have left us; and therefore, still the conformity of their definitions with that, must evidence his influence and assistance (which does not make them inerrable neither), and not a pretended assistance at all adventures, the divinity of their doctrines; which is to begin at the wrong end, and beg the question. And I cannot dismiss this text without this particular remark: that the fulminating, anathematizing humour, which has so much reigned in their Councils, is argument enough to me, that they have been acted by a quite contrary spirit to that which inspired the Apostolic Synod with such admirable moderation and temper, in their composing the celebrated controversy touching the necessity of Mosaic observances after conversion; for they would not proceed to an absolute prohibition of them, which might probably have exasperated the Judaizing zealots into an absolute apostasy, and yet shewed that tender regard to the Gentile converts' liberty, as to impose upon them no other observances than what were requisite in that exigency of affairs, in order to a perfect union betwixt them, for the more successful advancement of the common interest of Christianity.

Another text we are assaulted with, is, I think, peculiar to the Guide, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the Apostle speaks of the perpetual use of the ministry, for the full and complete building up of the Church (ver. 11, 12, 13): "That we henceforth," says he (ver. 14), "be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." "Which winds of doctrine," subjoins the Guide, "since the writings of the Apostles, and concerning the sense of their writings, blowing in the Church, and carrying the unstable to and fro, argue the same necessity of such doctors still," *i. e.* such as were the Apostles themselves.

But first, as has been already observed, those doctors could not suppress the winds of false doctrines from blowing in the Church, even in their own days, whilst they were yet alive to explicate and interpret the sense of the doctrines they taught,

it never being the design of infinite wisdom irresistibly to force truth upon any man's understanding; but to leave us to the freedom of our choice in our opinions, which, by reason of the prevalencies of men's debauched inclinations, passions, interests, &c. must, as the Apostle speaks, occasion heresies in the Church, that they who are approved may be made manifest: and if so, much less can the most presumptuous pretence to infallibility in explaining the Scriptures now, be supposed commensurate to that undesigned, unnecessary end of preventing or removing all difference of opinion in religious matters. For, secondly, unity of opinion in matters not necessary, is itself not necessary, whatever conveniences we may fancy would accrue to us from it, and is, indeed, in this lapsed state of humanity, utterly impossible; and as for things necessary, either of belief or practice, they are so plainly contained in those writings these inspired teachers have left us, that they who will not hear them, neither will they be persuaded of them, though a visible judge should arise even from the dead. And indeed, thirdly, that the religious unity here said to be procured in the Church, by the doctors and teachers spoke of in this chapter, respects only the great and necessary articles of our Christian faith, owned, God be thanked, by all Christian Churches, but concerning which the Ephesians, in the infancy of the Gospel, were "tossed to and fro" by the Jews and philosophers that abounded amongst them, the men "who laid in wait to deceive," is evidently the sense of St. Ambrose* and Theophylact upon this place. And, fourthly, after all, the world wants still to be informed why the doctors and teachers who are to keep us stedfast in the profession of a right faith, should be only those who live in communion with the Bishop of Rome, the question which they are pleased to beg all along.

Another they urge is, that character which St. Paul gives† of the Christian Church, that it is "the pillar and ground of truth;" and that "surely," says the Guide, "from its teachers being so." To which it is answered: first, That by truth here are meant those truly catholic and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, owned and confessed (*ὁμολογουμένως*, as the Apostle speaks in the next verse) by all or most Christian people, God be praised, at this day, *viz.* as it follows in the

* Ambros. in v. 13, 14. [vol. 2. Append. p. 242. Par. 1690.] Theoph. in v. 14. [Ut supra, vol. 2. p. 397.]

† 1 Tim. iii. 15.

context, that "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," which is far from an absolute exemption from all manner of error of whomsoever the words are understood. Secondly, That by Church here is meant the Church universal, not any particular societies or communions of it (and therefore not the Church of Rome exclusively of all others), unless we understand it of what in duty they ought to be, not what they always actually and of necessity are; for, to go no farther, the Asiatic Churches are a sad and deplorable instance that particular communions are not always pillars and supporters of the Christian truths, of which the Church of Ephesus, to which these words have a more peculiar and immediate relation, was one, and is long since, amongst the rest, utterly subverted and brought to desolation; an unanswerable argument, that the Apostle, by these words, could never mean that any particular Church should necessarily be preserved from even damnable and destructive error. Thirdly, That as the words relate not to any one particular communion, now extant, more than to another, so neither to their teachers, who as they all of them ought in a more special manner to be pillars, *i. e.* strenuous asserters and defenders of the Christian truths, professed in the respective communions, of which God has made them the overseers, and are frequently, with regard to their office and duty, so styled; so likewise, amongst ecclesiastical writers, are, and may still, any eminent persons in the Church, whether for learning, piety, constancy in tribulations (Rev. iii. 12), or the like; any one, I say, proportionably to his steadiness in the faith, and the service he does the Church, be justly dignified with the character of a pillar in it; that is, of one who in his way upholds and supports it. There is therefore no necessity of applying this title to the clergy only, since the laity as well as they, according to the measure of their abilities and piety, or their contraries, may, or may not, be "pillars in the temple of their God." Fourthly, And what coherence now betwixt this and infallibility? Can no man well grounded in the faith, defend it by his writings, or adorn it by his conversation, unless he be infallible? At this rate of arguing, most private doctors amongst them, nay, the Guide himself may, in time, lay claim to his great pretended prerogative of General Councils.

But this text being so fully illustrated and explained in a late pious and learned treatise, intituled, "The Pillar and Ground

of Truth," I shall remit the reader thither for his farther satisfaction, contenting myself here with the addition of this single reflection, that men are certainly hard put to it for proofs when they shall build the prime article of their faith (for such is the doctrine of infallibility to them) upon metaphorical expressions, such as are the words *pillar* and *ground* in this place, and the word *rock* before, in the 16th of St. Matthew. Another place peculiar to the Guide, is in the second chapter of the second Epistle of the same Apostle to Timothy, at the 19th verse, where he tells us, that though Hymenæus and others had erred concerning the truth, particularly in the doctrine of the resurrection (expounding it metaphorically, of a resurrection by our children, says St. Ambrose), yet, "nevertheless the foundation of God (the Church, its doctrine, and its children, says the Guide,) standeth sure." But first, it can never be proved that this stability here mentioned is peculiar and appropriate to the Church of Rome and her doctrine, which is all along taken for granted. For, secondly, the place manifestly speaks of the foundations, or prime fundamental articles of the Christian faith, such as the doctrine of the resurrection here contested, is owned and asserted by all Christian Churches as well as the Roman; which though, says the Apostle, they may be perverted by evil and designing men, to the seduction of some wavering and unstable Christians, yet nevertheless such heresies shall never so far prevail, but that these foundations shall remain firm and unalterable to the world's end: and let the Guide* make the best of this he can.

But yet farther, recommend me to him for his industry in endeavouring to prove this grand article of his faith out of the prophetic and mysterious Revelations of St. John; from that place particularly, where our Saviour is described walking in the midst of the seven Mother-Churches of Asia, and holding their bishops in his hand:† for what more unlucky instance could he have chosen to shew the indefectibility, as he loves to call it, of any Church, than this of the Asiatic Churches, who began so early a defection from the faith, and are long since brought to utter desolation. If he say he means it of the Church universal, then we are agreed; provided only that he do not tacitly put that senseless illusion upon us, of the Church of Rome's being the Church universal.

But lastly, above all, we can certainly never sufficiently ad-

* Theoph. in loc. [Ibid. p. 604.]

† Rev. i. 13, 16.

mire the sagacity of this incomparable Guide, who has found out a visible infallible judge of controversies, authorized by the great Apostle himself, in every exhortation of his to charity, peace, and unity, whether in affections or judgment. St. Paul* exhorts the Philippians to "stand fast in one spirit, to be of one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel, to have the same love or charity (for each other), to do nothing through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind to esteem each other better than themselves ;" and therefore there is an absolute necessity of a visible infallible judge in controversies, and he in the Church of Rome too, not in that of Philippi, to which this Epistle was wrote. •Where is the connection? The same Apostle writing to the Church of Rome, exhorts them to "be of the same mind one towards another, not to mind high things,"† (ecclesiastic monarchy, temporal grandeur, sovereignty over men's faith, by pretending to an infallible spirit,‡ than which things nothing can be higher), and therefore, for this very reason,•there is a necessity of those things, from which, in the general, the Apostle dehorts them.

It is a great happiness, I find, for a man to have once got a name in the world, for generally it is sufficient to dub the most elaborate trifling with the title of the profoundest reasoning, amongst the crowd of his professed and unthinking admirers. Had any of their late writers (if they deserve the name) of the sheet of paper size, wasted a little good ink upon such stuff as this, few, I believe, or none, would have thought it worth their notice ; but it being the Guide, the profound and knotty Guide, who has discovered an infallible judge speaking in such texts as these, we must, out of civility, make some return to his remark, and that shall be as short as possible ; in one word, if the Apostle had known that any such thing was to have been established in the Church, all his exhortations to agreement in judgment, all his injunctions against heresies, schisms, and divisions, had been utterly superfluous and impertinent. For to what purpose is it to exhort men to that which must of necessity be as long as they own themselves Christians ; upon this supposition of the Divine institution of an earthly infallible judge? Or, to what purpose again, to dehort men from that (religious faction and division) which, upon the same supposition, could never have infested the Christian Church?

* Cap. 1. p. 6, 7. Phil. i. 27. and ii. 2, 3.

† Rom. xii. 16.

‡ See the Guide, c. 1. p. 6, 7.

There remains but one text more urged by the Guide, for a blind and unlimited conformity to the doctrines of the Roman Church, and that is in Heb. xiii. 7 : "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God ; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." But were they the clergy of the Church of Rome who had the rule over, and had spoke the word of God unto the Hebrews ? And if not, how is their faith, such especially as it is at this day, concerned in this exhortation ? Which, in short, is designed only to establish the Jewish Christians in the faith, against the attempts of all persecutions to the contrary, by the noble and illustrious precedents in this kind, of those pastors and teachers whom God had set over them, as his propounding the end of their conversation to be more remarkably considered, seems naturally to import. The faith which they are here exhorted to imitate in their own conversation, being practical only,* that plerophory, or full assurance which relates to the promises ; not speculative or dogmatical, such as the intellectual pride and curiosity of after-ages, brought chiefly upon the stage of the Church ; when Creeds began to swell in proportion to men's fruitless debates, beyond their own divine and original dimensions.

And now, I think, I may safely dismiss the Guide and this subject together, being willing to pay that deference to the common vogue even of adversaries, as to think that if they pretend to any more artillery of this Scripture-kind in defence of their cause, he has certainly made use of those pieces of ordnance that would carry the truest and the farthest against us ; which yet we have seen, have either miserably overshot, or fallen short of their mark ; and are indeed only such, both for their number and the violence he has offered them, as seem to confirm us, that one design he had in alleging them was in consequence of the general argument of his book, the deciding of controversies by a majority of voices, howsoever corrupted and debauched to speak the sentiments of the present Church of Rome.

My design was, principally, to take into consideration the texts of Scripture made use of by the Guide in Controversies, for the proof of his Church's infallibility ; presuming that all other Scriptures produced by others would stand or fall with these, which one of his character had chosen out to settle his

* *μμεῖσθε τὴν πίστιν.*

cause upon. And if I have shewed those which he has urged to be impertinent to the cause in hand, I may well suppose the rest which I find in the Catholic Scripturist, and the Touchstone, &c. will not be able to keep the field after the former are discomfited. The Catholic Scripturist hath two chapters upon this argument: the first is of the infallibility of the Church; the second, that the Roman Church is this infallible Church.

For proof of the first he hath collected thirty several texts, which he hath reduced under three general heads. I shall give the reader a brief account of the chief of them, and by which he will be able to judge of the force of the rest.*

“The first sort of texts,” saith he, “are these, by which either God commands us universally to follow his Church, or speaks that of his Church which could not be delivered as it is, if this Church could err.” So Isaiah ii. 3. “Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and he will teach us in his ways, and we shall walk in his paths.” Verse 4. “And he shall judge among the nations.” Whence he infers, “Behold Christ erecting a tribunal in his Church to judge among nations, and decide all their controversies, which must needs suppose obedience to be yielded to this judgment.”†

Without doubt God will have a Church in the world, and that the Church is to teach the truth, and to be obeyed in the doctrine it teaches. But as there is a rule by which the Church is a Church, and a rule according to which it is to teach; so we are to find out the Church, and to try the doctrine it teaches by that rule. And as it is not the Church, without it be the Church described in that rule, so its doctrine is not to be received, nor is the Church to be obeyed, unless its doctrine be consonant with, and agreeable to that rule. So we are required to try the spirits by the doctrine, 1 John iv. 1, 2, 3. And if the doctrine differ from the doctrine before taught, whoever it be that teaches, whether an angel, or an apostle, or a Church, it is to be disclaimed, and is under an anathema, Gal. i. 8, 9. And therefore, our Saviour that taught them to observe what the Scribes and Pharisees that sat in Moses’s seat bid, Matth. xxiii. 2, 3, yet elsewhere cautions them to beware of their doctrine, Matth. xvi. 6, 11.‡

So far is it from truth, as well as from the Scripture he alleges, that Christ has erected a tribunal in his Church to decide all controversies, and which he commands us universally to follow.

* Point 5.

† Arg. I. n. 1.

‡ Answ.

“The second sort of texts, proving the infallibility of the Church, contain such glorious titles given her, or such admirable things spoken of her, as must needs be vain and truthless words, if ever the Church prove a mistress of errors; obtruding them to her children for Divine verities. First, Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14: ‘The Lord hath chosen Zion,’ &c. ‘This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell.’ Now Christ’s dwelling-place is his visible Church, 1 Tim. iii. 15. But how could it be his habitation and rest for ever, if a storehouse of errors?”*

1. By this argument the Jewish Church (of which the Psalm speaks) was as infallible as the Christian, and the Church of Ephesus, as the Church of Rome; since wherever there is a Church, there is the House of God.†

2. The being God’s house secures it no more from error than from sin: and his argument will equally prove the Church impeccable as infallible. Thus in his way, “How could it be his habitation and rest for ever, if a storehouse of impiety?”

3. The being of a Church is one thing, and the infallibility of it another. The promise of a “rest for ever,” if taken in its full extent, may infer that there shall be a Church, but not that there shall be an infallible Church.

“The third sort of texts to prove this infallibility contain such as plainly say, that God will still direct his Church to follow truth, or that it shall not revolt from the truth, &c. Behold how plain and direct a way to truth is promised the Church of Christ, Isa. xxxv. 5: ‘Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened,’ &c. And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness (the holy Catholic Church), ‘the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.’ It is therefore a way infallibly leading to truth. So chap. lix. 21: ‘This is my covenant with them, my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, &c. for ever.’”†

These texts, and the like,§ do declare what privileges God will grant to his Church; but among all these I can find no promise of infallibility; or if so, what is not made to every one, or any one in the Church as well as the other: for all are concerned in it that have “weak hands and feeble knees,” Isa. xxxv. 3, that “are of a fearful heart,” ver. 4, that are “blind

* Arg. 2. n. 12.

† Arg. 3. n. 18.

‡ Answ. 1.

§ Answ. 1.

and deaf," ver. 5, "lame and dumb," ver. 6, and all "the ransomed of the Lord," ver. 10. And so it is spoken to all the "seed," chap. lix. 21.

2. There is as much said of securing the Church from defilement and violence, as from error. For is it said, that "an highway shall be there, and the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein?" So that "highway" is presently called the "way of holiness," and it is said, "the unclean shall not pass over it;" and chap. xxxv. 9, "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, but the redeemed shall walk there," &c. and ver. 10, "they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away." But now, if notwithstanding these promises of purity and peace, there may be uncleanness in the "way of holiness;" and division, and persecution, and violence, where there is to be "everlasting joy:" then there may be error where "the wayfaring men shall not err." And so the promise of not erring doth no more imply infallibility, or an impossibility of erring, than the promise of holiness and peace implies an impossibility of impurity and violence.

But however, suppose this belongs, as he would have it, to the catholic Church; yet what is this to any particular Church? What is this to the Church of Rome more than to any other Church?

That we are to look for in the next chapter, the subject of which is,* "That the Roman Church is this infallible Church, and our judge in all points of controversy. This question," as he truly saith, "seems to import as much as the certain decision of all our controversies." And supposing he has proved the true Church to be infallible, he grants "there seems to be a vast labour to remain, to prove the Roman Church to be this Church." And here he tells us, if we may believe him, that they "are all to give full satisfaction in this." As how? The book is called "the Catholic Scripturist;" but now he that had thirty texts at his service in the former Point, when he comes to his "vast labour," and the Point that "imports the decision of all our controversies," finds not one; but instead of that, thus brings himself off: "I most earnestly beg of my reader to note well this one short demonstration, and he will see how evidently convincing it is to prove home our full intent," though without any Scripture. This is not directly

* Point. 6.

to our purpose, but because he so "earnestly begs" it, and because it is "short" and "demonstration" too, we will give it the reading. It is this :

"No Church can be the true infallible Church, and decider of all controversies, which teacheth herself to be fallible—but every Church in the world but the Roman teacheth herself to be fallible : wherefore, by evident demonstration, no other Church upon earth can be infallible." So that the "demonstration" depends upon her own declaration, and for the which there needs no other proof. But if this be "demonstration," then so is fallacy and self-conceit ; and if this be "evident demonstration," then folly, and fancy and presumption are reason in perfection. As I shall make good by a parallel instance. It is held by many that there is a Philosopher's Stone, which will by its secret power turn all metals into gold ; but may the impostor say, There is no one besides myself that saith they have this stone, therefore I that say I have it, have it ; and all that own there is such a stone, though they have it not, are bound to believe that I have it ? If this be an "evident demonstration" for him, then all the *adepti*, and that employ their time, labour and diligence in quest of it, are to rest perfectly satisfied in his integrity, sufficiency and skill, and to betake themselves to him for direction. . But we do not find that this will pass for "demonstration" in this or any other case ; and, therefore, he must either find out some other character of demonstration than what is yet understood, or must quit all pretence to demonstration. And if this be all the proof the Church of Rome hath for its infallibility, we have no more reason to believe it than the chemists have to give credit to every enthusiast or impostor.

BOOK II.

THE POPISH RULE OF FAITH EXAMINED AND DISPROVED, AS
RESTING UPON THE AUTHORITY OF GENERAL COUNCILS.

OF THE AUTHORITY OF COUNCILS,

AND

THE RULE OF FAITH.

THE PREFACE.

IF there be an infallible judge of controversies in the Church, it is fit that so great an authority should bear down all before it, and be instead of a thousand answers to all objections : but it is as true on the other side, that if the judge has erred, he cannot be infallible ; and if any man tell me, it is a bold thing to say of an infallible judge, that he has erred ; I can be even with him, by answering, that it is as bold for a judge that has erred, to say, he is infallible : so that the point must be pleaded at the bar of every man's private judgment, before it can be gained ; and if a judge were here that that could not err, he would confess, I think, that it could not be put to a fairer issue than this ; whether I have, or have not, more reason to believe, that the judge has erred ; than I have to believe, that it is impossible he should ?

The claim to infallibility is set up no where, that I know of, but in the Church of Rome ; and I have had this reason to wish it might be made good, because it would have saved me the labour of inquiring any further ; whereas, if it be void, all the particular controversies we have with her, must be examined by themselves.

I must confess likewise, that having received my baptism

and education in the Church of England, and upon mature deliberation, having made that my own act now, which was heretofore the act of my parents, I could not but wish also, that upon trial she might be found faithful; but I hope, that no consideration of this sort, have biassed me one way or other to partiality; I am sure, if any has, it is more than I am sensible of; and if indifference on which side the truth lies, be any advantage towards the discerning it, I have so much the more reason to be assured, that I have not been mistaken in the main, because I have sincerely desired, and according to my capacity endeavoured not to be mistaken at all.

That there is a necessity in a living, infallible, visible guide, in order to Christian faith, I could never be persuaded to, since I knew myself a believer of the holy Scriptures, and of universal tradition, without believing any such guide; and as for those doctrines of the Church of Rome, which the Church of England rejects; I cannot but think, that if they are to be made out, either by Scripture or tradition, I may be as well convinced of it, by a reasonable man, who is yet not infallible, as I am already convinced, that those articles of faith, in which both Churches agree, are contained in the Scriptures; and that the Scriptures stand upon the evidence of universal tradition. So that if I do already believe this much upon rational grounds, as I am sure I do, and may be led to the belief of all the rest (if I do not yet believe enough) upon the same grounds, as surely I may, if they stand upon the same grounds; I cannot feel the necessity of an infallible, visible, living guide, to make me a believer.

But if God has, indeed, given such a guide to his Church, I am ready with all thankfulness to submit myself to him, notwithstanding my persuasion that there is no necessity of such a one in order to faith; for if I am not to presume, that God who always does that which is best, has therefore done whatsoever seems to me to be so; much less can I conclude, that he has not done that for his creatures, which I see no necessity that he should have done for the attaining of their end; especially since it is evident, that in his abundant goodness, he has given us plentiful means of happiness, both for this, and a better life, over and above what is absolutely necessary to ~~cher~~ ^{live}.

My business therefore was to see, whether God hath left such a guide in this Church, as we are told of. To which end, it was necessary, in the first place, to consider these words

of our blessed Saviour to his Apostles, "Go, teach all nations," &c. And, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And, "the Spirit shall lead you into all truth:" and those other texts of Scripture, which are said to contain the promise, or at least the supposition of such a guide. Now these places have been so sifted on both sides, that if the power of interest and passion were not too well known, one would wonder that both parties have not long since concurred in that truth, which would have yielded equal triumph to the victors and the vanquished.

It is needless here to insist upon a thing so well known, as the sense of our divines concerning these places; I shall only say, that whereas none of these texts seem to have any great difficulty in them, they must be, in my judgment, the most abstruse, difficult places in all the Bible, if that be the true sense of them, which is maintained by the other side.

So that since the proof of such a guide being promised, is so obscure, if it be a proof at all, it is but reasonable to expect that it should be supplied afterwards, by some considerable evidence, that in fact there hath been such a guide in the Church, and still is: and consequently, that the event should be a notable help to the interpretation of those places of Scripture, which, as it is said, do either promise or suppose such a guide.

But when I consider that such a guide is pretended to no where, but in the Roman communion; how loth soever I am to remember the particular controversies we have with that Church, till this be decided, yet do what I can, it comes into my mind, that it is incomparably more evident to me, that she has established some doctrines and practices contrary to the Scripture, than that the Scripture has promised any such guide at all, and still much more, than that this guide should be found in the Roman Church.

And that which yet more perplexes the cause is, that the Romanists do not agree where this infallibility is lodged; there are several pretenders to it, whose titles are defended by their several champions, with a zeal answerable to the greatness of the cause. It seemed strange to me, that a pretence to infallibility amongst them, should be better secured by not agreeing, than by an open and unanimous declaration where to fix it, and no where else: this, I thought, did not look like that assurance which fears no opposition, but rather, like the caution of some wary prince in the day of battle, who (know-

ing that the success of his cause and party depends upon the safety of his person), apparels several of his followers every way like himself, both to amuse the enemy, and that so long as any of them are safe, his party may not seem to want an head: now this policy (if it is any sort of security against their adversaries) certainly renders them very much unable in many cases to succour their friends, whom it leaves in as great perplexities, as they pretend we are, since they will be at a loss to which of the pretenders to address themselves for resolution of their doubts.

Of all the pretenders, the most likely seemed to be the authority of General Councils; and therefore being resolved not to trust private writers of either side, I undertook to search the Councils themselves, believing that I should find not only what they, but what Popes have done too in the establishing of doctrine. The pretence of the infallibility of oral tradition, is so new and weak, that there is nothing to make it considerable, but the honour that has been done it, by an exquisite confutation.*

In a convenient library, I have by me Binius's edition of the Councils, printed at Cologne, A.D. 1606. I thought I could not choose one of more unquestionable authority amongst the Romanists; for besides, that he dedicates his book to Pope Paul V. and to Cardinal Baronius, at whose desire, as he says, he made those collections; and that he has the approbation of Xilander, Professor of Divinity at Cologne; he discovers in his Notes upon the Councils, so great a zeal for the Roman Church, and especially for the Papal power, that I believed none could suspect he would falsify records to the prejudice of that cause, which he so zealously defends.

Now if the decrees in matters of faith, of any pretender to infallibility, established at one time, were inconsistent with decrees in matters of faith which were made at another time; I may spare any farther labour of inquiring what proofs any other persons have produced to maintain that title, because it has by its own acts disproved and deprived itself. And I am sure, that if General Councils have contradicted one another, I have more reason to believe that they have erred, than any man can shew me that they cannot err. For no man can have more reason to believe any thing, than he has for this, that contradictions cannot be true.

* Dr. Tillotson's Rule of Faith.

Our Church has a reverend esteem for the four first General Councils; we embrace their confessions of faith, and whatsoever they defined to be heresy, we judge to be so. If it be demanded why we approve of them, and not of all the rest; we answer, because their determinations in matters of faith are manifestly warranted by the holy Scriptures. If this answer satisfy not, let us inquire whether the Romanists themselves do universally adhere to the decrees in matter of faith, of all General Councils. If it appears that they do, I shall then think myself obliged to give a farther answer. But if they do not, then any reason which they can allege, may upon as good, nay better grounds, suffice for us.

OF THE AUTHORITY OF COUNCILS.

THAT General Councils have that authority, as to oblige us without more ado to believe all that they define, is what we of this Church may modestly enough deny; when it is evident that Bellarmine, Baronius and Binius, with the rest of the Roman-court flatterers, do in reality give less deference to General Councils, than we of the Church of England do. For though we do not think they are infallible, yet as we believe that some of them have not erred; so where force and fraud are not used, we think the conclusions of so venerable an assembly, even those that agree not with our present sentiments, ought to be well considered, and not rejected without manifest reason for so doing.

But although these courtiers find it very convenient to boast that their faith is established upon General Councils; yet it is plain that they only affect the glorious name of such an authority, and that in good earnest they value not the thing.

Bellarmino* has two books, the one of "Councils and the Church," the other of "the Authority of Councils;" in both which he speaks of them very magnificently now and then. But after all his flourishes, their authority is, in truth, nothing; but that of the Pope is all in all with him. One would have thought, that in that chapter, the very title whereof is, that

* Tom. 2. lib. 1, 2. [p. 1, &c. 32, &c. Prag. 1721.]

“the bishops in council are not counsellors, but judges;”* he should have industriously dissembled his partiality for the Pope; and yet, even there, he gives him the power to “follow the lesser part of the Council in forming the decree;” and that forsooth, because he is not only President of the Council, but supreme Prince of the Church also. Which is such stuff from a man that would make the bishops in councils judges, that I cannot but be ashamed and grieved, to find either so much folly, or so much insincerity amongst the learned men of this way, in laying down the very foundation of their faith.

Why should these men pretend to assign the conditions that are requisite to a General Council, as if some very great matter depended upon it, when in effect they tell us also, that it is so insignificant a thing in point of authority, when it is once assembled. As for that fourth condition required by Bellarmine, how reasonable soever it is in itself, it is yet in him very unaccountable, *viz.* that “some bishops, at least, come together from the greater part of the Christian provinces :† for instance, if the Council be in the East, it should be thought sufficient that many bishops meet together out of all the provinces of the East; but out of all the West, that some be sent to supply the place of others.” With this I could be well enough content; for as the exigence of affairs never did, so I doubt it never will permit all the bishops of the world to come together. And therefore, upon the indiction of a General Council, that must go for one, which is as general as can well be, which is free at least, and from which no bishop is excluded, and in which a competent number of bishops from all parts is assembled. But I would gladly know why, even thus many bishops should be put to the trouble, if the Pope has that power which is given him by so great a part of the Roman Church, as their courtiers and their followers make? If in forming the decree, he has authority to follow the lesser part, if he pleases so to do? If he can thus not only avoid all they do, when they have given their suffrages, but determine directly against the major part? If this be so, what need can there be of General Councils at all, to determine controversies of faith? Especially, since we are told also, that “particular Councils being confirmed by the Pope, cannot err?”‡ What

* De Conc. et Eccl. lib. 1. c. 18. [Ibid. p. 22. col. 1.]

† De Conc. lib. 1. c. 16. [cap. 17. ibid. p. 21. col. 2.]

‡ De Conc. Auct. lib. 2. c. 5. [Ibid. p. 36. col. 2.]

authority then has a general, above a particular Council? For a General Council may err without the Pope, and a particular Council cannot err with him. The Pope, if this be true, has no more to do, but to get the bishops of his own diocese together upon any occasion, and then to declare to all the world, what the true faith is in the question controverted; for this will be done by an infallible authority, and a General Council can have no more. Nay, if the Pope has the same liberty to follow the lesser part of a diocesan Synod, that he has in General Synods, I should think his own bishops might even have tarried at home too, and the Pope have done the business of Councils by himself, without either general or particular Councils. For, if what these men say be true, he could do it as substantially: and the only reason I can think of, why bishops must be put to the charge and trouble of meeting together, is, that he could ~~not~~ do it as plausibly to the eye of the world, without a Council, as with it. These men may talk as long as they will of the infallibility of General Councils, but they that will use their eyes, cannot but see, that according to their principles, Councils are called together for show and pageantry; but when all is done, the "fulness of power and authority" is in the Bishop of Rome.

We hear very great boasts of the unity of the Roman communion, caused by an unanimous submission to the authority of General Councils; but any man may see that this is but a sham pretence, who for instance, meets with one chapter in Bellarmine,* concerning "General Councils that are rejected," and another of "General Councils partly approved, and partly disapproved:"† and at last, the reason of approving or disapproving, to be the Pope's confirming or not confirming. For surely, with these men, General Councils cannot be the infallible means of ending or preventing controversies; since, when they have done their work, there must be another rule used to know, whether they are to be received or rejected; and if received, whether in whole, or in part only.

It were something indeed, if they were agreed among themselves, in the Roman communion, by what rule to receive or reject Councils. But upon this question, there is, and long has been as notorious a difference, as any is amongst Christians; and as I shall shew, before I have done, Popes and

* De Conc. l. 1. c. 6, 7. [Ibid. p. 5, 6.]

† Lib. 2. c. 2. [Ibid. p. 32. col. 1.]

Councils have been directly contrary to one another about it. At present, it will be enough to observe, that with the Court-party of Rome, the true marks of a General Council, which is to signify any thing, are these; that the Pope must call it, that the Pope must preside in it personally, or by his legates; and that the Pope must confirm it: that is to say, that the Pope must govern in it, from one end to the other. By which rule it is wisely provided, that General Councils shall never be able to do any thing for the good of the catholic Church, if it does not agree with the interest of the Papacy; because the Pope can own them or disown them as he pleases; just as the Grand Signior serves himself of the Algerines, who are his good allies, or his subjects, when it is for his turn to call them so; but are left to themselves, when that will do better.

But then there has always been a party in that communion, as contrary to the former in this fundamental point, as light is to darkness, inasmuch as they make the Council to be above the Pope: such as these were Gerson, Almain, Panormitan, &c. and generally the Gallican clergy: these men considered, that anciently Christian Emperors summoned General Councils, and when they met, that they did their business without the Bishop of Rome, if he were refractory; and condemned him no less than others, if he were found in error. That as for the necessity of the Pope's approbation of Councils, it was a thing unknown to antiquity; witness the opposition that the Roman see made to the 28th canon of the Council of Chalcedon; which the Fathers of that Council valued not, but gave the Pope that respect, which was due to so great a bishop, and went on with their business, notwithstanding the expostulation of his legates. And to add no more, that Pope Honorius for his Monothelism, was condemned by the sixth General Council, and that the Acts of the Council were confirmed by the Emperor; all that was there done, being afterwards approved and confirmed by Pope Leo II. even to the condemnation of Honorius himself.

This side has hitherto subsisted in the Roman communion, by the advantage of a great deal of truth, and by the learning of those that maintain it; but chiefly by the numbers that follow it, and their attributing a larger power and jurisdiction to the Roman bishop, than the Reformed do; though they are far from making him the visible sovereign of the Church, as the courtiers do. The other side, though it has wanted neither numbers nor learning to countenance it, seems rather to have

prevailed by the advantage of greatness and preferments, which are not disposed of by Councils, but by Popes. .

But whatever it be that supports in one communion, two parties at so great a distance from one another, the scandal of the controversy has obliged some few here and there to take up in a middle kind of way between them, *viz.* that no stress is to be laid on either side, but that it is sufficient to believe all definitions to be infallibly true, in which Popes and Councils have concurred. For infallibility must be somewhere in the Church, and if they are sure of it, when there is a concurrence of the Roman bishops, with the majority of suffrages in a General Council; it is all one to them, whether he or the Council has the greater authority, or what share either of them has in the infallibility of the decision. Which way, though it neither agrees to that antiquity, which one party justly pretends for the superiority of Councils, nor to that novelty which the other has laboured to establish in favour of the Pope; I do not yet find advanced in opposition to the other two, but rather used as an expedient in countries, where Protestants and Romanists are mixed together, to avoid answering for that great difference which does in effect divide the communion of the Church of Rome.

And therefore, to this supposition, I shall not oppose the arguments of the two parties, but content myself to shew, that no party in the Roman Church does believe all that has been defined by General Councils; nor can believe all, unless they can believe direct contradictions. In the pursuance of which design, I shall produce such instances, as will not only be good against the best learned and most ingenious party in the Roman Church, *viz.* the favourers of Councils; but against those also that require the concurrence of the Pope to make their authority infallible.

Now for those learned gentlemen in the Roman Church, who have most deservedly set up the authority of General Councils above that of the Pope's, and who have demonstrated, that the ancient Councils gained no more by the Pope's concurrence, nor lost more by wanting it, than by gaining or wanting the authority of any other Patriarch; it should seem one of the easiest things in the world, to shew, that either they did not believe the infallibility of General Councils, or else, that they must believe contradictions: for if the courtiers are in the right (as so far they undoubtedly are), who tell us of some

General Councils that are partly received, and partly rejected ; and of others that are wholly disapproved in the communion of the Roman Church ; then those of the Roman communion who assert the rights of Councils in opposition to the Papal usurpation, must acknowledge, that neither is the authority of General Councils so great as to be esteemed justly a foundation of faith, or a reason obliging us, without farther consideration, to profess what they have defined. If General Councils cannot err, how come these gentlemen to be persuaded, that the Council of Ariminum, consisting of about 600 bishops, which also was backed by a Synod of Eastern bishops at Seleucia, did not discharge the Church of all obligation to quit the belief and profession of the Son's being consubstantial with the Father ? The second Council of Ephesus had a general summons, and in respect of the number of bishops, it was as general as Councils sometimes were, which are esteemed so ; and yet we all say they erred, with Dioscorus : and many more instances there are of this nature, which are ready to all learned men of all sides. But then how can they who attribute the most to a General Council, make it a judge of controversy, that, without more ado, obliges to believe its sentence ? A guide that is to be followed with the obedience of faith ? For if they do so, why do they not acknowledge that the Church was bound to follow these ? For against their authority no exceptions can be made (setting aside ours, that they have actually erred), but such as Canus makes ;* that this Council was summoned against the Pope's will ; and that Council was not approved by him at all ; and a third but in part ; which exceptions can take no place with those, who in good earnest assert the independence of General Councils upon the Pope.

But I shall insist a little more upon an instance, which, if I mistake not, will reach the courtiers, and the accommodators too, that contend for infallibility in the Pope, and in the major part of the suffrages in a General Council ; I mean the Sirmian Council, which was not long before that of Ariminum, and which composed the Creed that was read and owned at Ariminum : Bellarmine † places this Council amongst the General Councils, and says, it was partly approved, and partly disapproved : as to the former, I make no question but he was in the right ; and that the Sirmian Council could as fairly pretend to be the most supreme and universal Church authority,

- * De Auth. Con. l. 5. Colon.

† De Conc. l. 6, 7. [l. 1. c. 7. ut supra, p. 6. col. 2.]

as the Council of Trent, or any one of those Councils which the Oxford man* relies upon for the doctrine of transubstantiation, will, I doubt not, appear to any man that shall impartially consider the case: but though I question not the Council ought to be in great part disapproved, yet why Bellarmine, or any of his way, should diapprove all that they disapproved in it, I cannot well understand.

In short, the Sirmian Council was summoned by the Emperor Constantius (that I know the courtiers regard not), but for what it determined at last, it had the concurrence of Pope Liberius, which I hope they will think of answering for; and which is more than all the rest, the general spread of the Arian (or as Epiphanius† calls it, the Semi-Arian) doctrine by that Council established, was a woful testimony that it was generally received.

The several conventions of the Sirmian Council, Bellarmine seems not to have minded at all: Baronius hath adjusted them inconsiderately: Petavius‡ was the first man that took pains about it, to any purpose; and Valesius§ hath done it at last, as well, perhaps, as it is possible to be done; but though he has set right the chronology of what was done at Sirmium, by the bishops that met there, yet I find no proof for what he supposes, *viz.* that there were as many Councils, as he indeed shews that there were conventions in that city; and the several meetings of the bishops there, though at so great a distance from one another as they were, might as well be the several sessions of the same General Council, interrupted by the troubles of the empire, as three several Councils indicted one after another; for though Councils anciently did their business all at once, yet it seems to me more probable, that there was this singularity in the conventions at Sirmium, than that the ancient historians should be so grossly mistaken, as to represent all that was done at Sirmium to be done in one Council, if there were three Councils for the doing of them.

But whether the bishops met there the second and third time by virtue of the old, or of a new indiction, is a matter of no great moment. It is plain by the whole current of affairs in

* Disc. concerning the Adoration of the Eucharist, p. 28.

† Epiph. Hær. 73. [vol. 1. p. 844. Colon. 1682.]

‡ Petav. not. in Epiph. Hær. 73. [Ibid. vol. 2. p. 306, &c.]

§ Val. not. in Soc. l. 2. c. 30. [p. 124, &c. Cantab. 1720.] in Sozom. l. 4. c. 6. [p. 135. Cantab. 1720.] c. 15. [Ibid. p. 149, 150.]

the reign of Constantius, that he and the bishops that favoured Arianism, were vehemently bent to run down Athanasius* by the authority of a General Council: in the consulship of Sergius and Nigrinianus, which was in the year 351, the Sirmian Council met and composed a Creed, differing in words, but agreeing in sense to the Nicene Creed, and deposed Photinus the bishop of Sirmium, who had revived the Samosateneian blasphemy. This is very plausible, and at that time they were content to have felt their own strength, by passing a creed in other words, that had an orthodox sense; but they proceeded no further, the western bishops, for what cause I know not (unless the disturbances of the empire hindered them), not being come thither; for it is plain from St. Hilary,† that those bishops of the west, mentioned by Socrates, as present at the Council of Sirmium, were not there at the deposition of Photinus.

But in the year 357, matters had been so well prepared in that interval, that the bishops of the east and west assembled at Sirmium; great care had been taken to make the assembly as full as might be; and that venerable old Bishop Hosius,‡ was compelled to come thither, and by rigorous and cruel usage, to subscribe that Creed there composed, which makes "the Father greater in honour, dignity, and deity, than the Son." I shall hereafter inquire, why those of the Church of Rome, that are for the infallibility of General Councils, reject the Creed of this convention?

In the mean time,§ after the publishing of this Creed, they seemed to be sensible of their indiscretion, in winding up the string so high as they had done; and above a year after met again, and composed that other Creed which was read at Ariminum afterward: this Creed, though not so fulsome as the other, yet excluded the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, which was all that the Arians desired: the most remarkable thing done in this convention was the restitution of Pope Liberius, who having now been two years almost a banished man for the orthodox faith, and being grown weary of his sufferings, subscribed, in his banishment, the Arian confession,

* Soz. l. 4. c. 6. [Ibid. p. 135, &c.] Soc. l. 2. c. 29, 30. [Ibid. p. 123, &c.]

† Hilar. de Syn. Soc. l. 2. c. 29. [Ibid. p. 123.]

‡ Soc. l. 2. c. 31. [Ibid. p. 130.] Soz. l. 4. c. 6. [Ibid. p. 135.]

§ Soc. l. 2. c. 30. [Ibid. p. 124, &c.] Soz. l. 4. c. 6. [Ibid.]

after the eastern and western bishops had subscribed it first. This appears by his two epistles recited by Baronius,* one to the Eastern bishops, the other to Vincentius, bishop of Capua; in the former he consents to the condemnation of Athanasius as just; professes unity and peace with them all; with a willing mind receives the true catholic faith, expounded at Sirmium; and desires their holinesses, because they ever see him agreeing with them in all things, that they would vouchsafe to endeavour that he may be freed from exile, and restored to his see: the other is almost to the same purpose, and therefore I need not repeat it. But to omit at present the testimonies of Athanasius† and St. Jerome, so well known in this matter, I think it may not be amiss to take notice what St. Hilary has left upon record about it; he recites the words of Liberius, professing his sincere agreement to that faith which had been expounded at Sirmium, and in reciting them, breaks off thrice to anathematize him for his Arian perfidiousness, concluding thus: “I anathematize thee again, and this the third time, O thou prevaricator, Liberius.”

Thus, it seems, the stream ran on the Arian side; and as by torments Hosius was compelled, when the Council sat the second time at Sirmium, so Liberius finding no other remedy, submitted at last;‡ and it should seem by his epistle to Ursacius, Valens, and Germinius, that his being sensible that the world was against him, was no small motive to his concurrence with the Council; for his words are these: “But whosoever shall depart from our peace and concord, which by the will of God is established through the WHOLE WORLD, let him know that he is separated from our communion:” upon which Hilary was not able to forbear, but to the recital of those words, added those of his own, “I denounce Anathema to thee, with the Arians, O thou prevaricator.” To conclude this business, upon the compliance of Liberius, he was restored to the administration of the Papacy, in a kind of commission with Felix, who had been made Pope after Liberius was banished;§ for though it was against ecclesiastical law and custom, that there should be more than one bishop of a city,

* Baron. Annal. tom. 2. An. 357. n. 43, 45. [vol. 4. p. 306, 307. Luc. 1739.]

† Athan. Epist. ad solit. p. 838. Hieron. tom. 1. p. 298. Basil. Hilar. Fragm. [vol. 2. p. 679. Veron. 1730.]

‡ Id. ibid. [p. 682.]

§ Soz. l. 4. c. 15. [Ibid. p. 150.]

yet it seems the authority of a General Council was counted sufficient to supersede it.

Having thus given the best account I can, from ancient writers, of the transactions of this Synod, I am now to inquire, why those of the Church of Rome do not admit the decrees of it.

And in the first place, it seems to me, that they who pretend all General Councils to be infallible, and that the concurrence of the Pope is not necessary to make them so, cannot so much as avoid being concluded by the second convention, where that blasphemous Creed was made, which we have already mentioned.

For if it be objected, that the Council repented of their second Creed, and above a year after composed a third :

I would desire to know, how long a pretender to infallibility may persist in an error, before he disproves and destroys his title ; for though in the debates, many notorious errors may be offered and hotly maintained by many of the members, without impeachment of the infallibility of the whole Synod ; yet when once they come to a settled resolution, and publish a decree in matters of faith, that ought always to be esteemed sacred and divine.

As for the Roman courtiers, they, I know, will avoid answering for the second Creed, by pretending that Liberius subscribed it not ; now before I have done, I make no question but to demonstrate, that if all General Councils confirmed by Popes, are sacred and infallible, then even these gentlemen are to be concluded by the second convention of the Sirmian Synod, and the Creed that was made there, though Liberius subscribed it not ; which though at first sight it looks like a very odd undertaking, yet I only desire the reader's patience till I come to the place that is proper for the performance ; and withal, he is to remember all along, that whilst I am obliging them to believe contradictions, it is what they ought to be ashamed of, and not I, who indeed would oblige them to lay aside those principles which cannot be held under a less penalty than of being obliged to believe contradictions.

But in the mean time, as the case stands at present, I cannot see how they should reasonably avoid being determined by the third Creed, to which Liberius subscribed ; and though this was not blasphemous like the second, yet it was heretical, in that the word *substance* was rejected ; concerning which very thing in the Council of Ariminum, St. Jerome thus ex-

presses himself,* “Then the word *substance* was abolished ; then the condemnation of the Nicene faith was finished ; the whole world groaned, wondering that it was become Arian.” No wonder, therefore, that he says too,† “Liberius, overcome with the miseries of exile, and subscribing to heretical pravity, entered Rome as a conqueror.”

I know Baronius earnestly endeavours to acquit Liberius from being a heretic, though he confesses, that because he consented so shamefully to Constantius, and for his communion with heretics, he was utterly esteemed banished from the communion of Catholics, and for the same altogether unfit for episcopal functions ; but surely Athanasius, Hilary, and St. Jerome, knew what was heresy, full as well as Baronius, and understood the history of those times something better than Baronius did.

If it be pretended that Liberius did only obliquely, but not directly establish heresy by condemning Athanasius, and communicating with heretics ; the contrary is evident from what has been already produced against Liberius, from St. Hilary, nay, even from Baronius himself, *viz.* That he subscribed with a willing mind, as Liberius himself testifies, to the faith agreed upon at Sirmium.

If it be objected, that Liberius repented the condemnation of Athanasius, and his former errors, as appears by an epistle from him to Athanasius, which, says Baronius, was as it were a covenant of their reconciliation.

I answer, that no such thing appears in that epistle, which (besides that it is no ways manifest when it was written) is of doubtful credit, as Bellarmine affirms, and gives very good reason for his opinion. If he had repented the condemnation of Athanasius,‡ he should have endeavoured his restitution, which was not effected by his means, but by the Emperor Jovian.

And sure he was desperately gone into heresy, if we may believe Anastasius and Luitprandus, who wrote, the one of them about 800, the other about 700 years since ; inasmuch as he consented that they who apostatized to Arianism (or Semi-Arianism) should be rebaptized. And if Stephen I. did well to excommunicate the bishops of Cappadocia, Cilicia, and the eastern regions adjoining, because they in a Synod

* Dial. Adv. Luciferian. [vol. 2. p. 191. Veron. 1735.]

† In Chron.

‡ Athan. tom. 2. p. 33.

at Iconium, decreed, that they, who having been baptized by heretics, were converted, should be rebaptized; what shall we think of Liberius, who consented that they, who having received baptism in the catholic Church, and afterwards apostatized, should be rebaptized into such a Christ as the Arians declared? Certainly, after such a fall as this, a man cannot be believed to repent, unless he gives very notable testimonies of repentance.

But if this pretence were true, yet I have shewn it to be very insufficient in the former case, and it is as insufficient in this. But that we may never be troubled with it more, either in the case of a Council repenting of what itself has done, or of a Pope reperting his concurrence with a Council, or of one Pope and Council repenting (if it be sense so to speak) of what another Pope and Council has determined, I shall in a few words dispatch it here; I say therefore, that although repentance is not only allowable, but commendable in a fallible sinner, after he has swerved from the true faith, yet it is so improper a qualification for an infallible judge, that it is absolutely inconsistent with any just pretence to infallibility: for it must necessarily suppose an error, or the repentance itself must necessarily be one. Though in matters of order and discipline, Councils may alter their decrees with respect to a change of times and other circumstances, and their infallibility remain; yet matters of faith are unalterable; and this especially, concerning the Divinity of our blessed Saviour, is so inviolable, that it is no presumption to say, that Almighty God who cannot lie, cannot alter it. And therefore, if Councils and Popes determine in this matter what they have cause to depart from afterwards, they do very well to change, but they do very ill to pretend to infallibility.

So that if it will do them any service, they may say, for me, that Liberius repented: but still I must say, that his repentance came too late to null that authority which he had given to those acts of the Sirmian Synod, which had his concurrence. Nor can any reason be given, why it should null them any more than that the present Pope's declaration should have been sufficient to do it, if Liberius, and all his successors to the last Pope, had stood to what Liberius had done. And if we cannot tell whether Popes and Councils have done their work as they should have done it, and exerted their infallibility in matters of faith, till we are sure that what they have done, shall not be undone again; then they may

determine what they please, but we shall never know whether they have determined with authority to oblige our assent, till the day of judgment.

Which since our adversaries will not say, I doubt the authority of this Council will lay hold upon them, after Liberius had formerly concurred with it, and was thereupon restored to the administration of the Papacy, and as Jerome says, entered Rome as a conqueror. And therefore, although Baronius calls this Council a conventicle of Satan, as I think, its impious acts considered, it deserves to be called; yet, why he should call a Synod of Eastern and Western bishops, after a Pope had approved and subscribed to their Creed; why, I say, he should call it by so hard a name, is something strange to any one that considers what stress the Roman-court-party lay upon the Papal authority.

But if it be now objected, that the proceedings of that Council were by no means conciliary, in which case a Council has no authority, and all the acts of it are void without more to do: if it be said, that great violence and cruelty was used by Constantius, against those who opposed the Arian faction; that Constantius, who was not baptized, ought not to have intermeddled in the affairs of the Church; and that the miseries of banishment, or, as Baronius says, his emulation to Felix, who usurped his seat, had biassed Liberius.

To this I answer, that if our blessed Saviour's words, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," together with those other promises which are usually produced out of the Scripture in this cause; if, I say, those places do infer an universal, visible, living, and infallible guide, to which God will always afford such effectual assistance as shall always preserve it from all errors, and lead it into all truth in matters of faith, so that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," then that assistance seems more needful to preserve and defend it from the force and fraud of the devil and his instruments, *viz.* wicked, cruel, and powerful men (which appear most properly to be the gates of hell), than against the unwary and involuntary failings and infirmities of good and well-minded men. Therefore, this General Council not having such assistance, proves plainly that they were not that universal, visible, and infallible guide; and if they, through fear or ambition, swerved so foully from the truth, what security can Christians have (if they do not examine what is defined) that any other General

Council has not, or may not be as much misled by the same or other as undue respects?

Besides, in a General Council the majority ought to have the decisive power of the whole, else doubts and disputes may never be determined; these challenge also full authority, not only over their own members, but all other persons whatsoever, and to choose what means and instruments, and what manner they judge most convenient, to reduce and compel by persuasions, anathemas, banishment, deposition, &c. and in later ages, by death itself, to chastise heretics as they please. Something of this course was used at the General Council of Nice, wherein the Emperor Constantine, being yet unbaptized, banished Arius, and Eusebius, and Theognis, bishops of Nicomedia and Nicæa, as Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret testify.

Photinus was condemned, and ejected from the bishopric of Sirmium, and banished in the Council there.

By virtue of the same authority,* the second General Council at Constantinople anathematized Theodorus bishop of Mop-suestia, the writings of Theodoret bishop of Cyrus, and an epistle of Ibas; in which anathemas they also involved Vigilius the Pope in such manner as I shall declare. The Council being assembled to consider of the three former points, which were called the *Tria Capitula*, or three chapters: the Pope and Council not well agreeing concerning the determination of them, the Pope, though at that time in the same city, and in the first and second sessions, earnestly invited by the Council to join with them, or send his legates to preside therein, refused to come. To him adhered seventeen western bishops, an arch-deacon, and two deacons of Rome; and declining the Council, they together with him made a kind of separate Synod, and the Council acted without them.

Notwithstanding, Vigilius, according to his promise to the Emperor Justinian, sent to him and the Council, and published to all the catholic world his decree or constitution† concerning the matters in question, signed by himself, and those twenty that joined with him. In that decree he gives reasons why he defends the three chapters, why he dares not condemn them himself, and why he forbids others to condemn them. In the end of it he says, "We ordain and decree that it is not lawful

* Bin. tom. 2. p. 517. [Labbe, Concil. vol. v. p. 575—578. Lut. Par. 1671.]

† Bar. Ann. an. 553. Num. 47. [vol. 10. p. 101. col. 1. Luc. 1741.]

for any belonging to ecclesiastical orders or dignities to write, utter, compose, teach, or move any further question, after this our present decree, concerning the often mentioned three chapters; but if any thing is, or shall be done, said or written, concerning these three chapters, against those things which we have here asserted, or ordained, in the name of any one whomsoever, appertaining to ecclesiastical orders or dignities, this we every way reject by authority of the Apostolic see, over which, by the grace of God, we preside.”*

Notwithstanding this solemn decree,† which was published during their fifth session, the Council having read and examined the matters in question, and also the several acts of the Council of Chalcedon, concerning the epistle of Ibas, did as solemnly anathematize the said three chapters, and all those that defended them, and all those who would not accurse them, and declared all such to be heretics in their sixth and eighth sessions.

These sentences Baronius acknowledges‡ were decreed directly against the constitution of Vigilius.

I have not here set down the reasons offered by Vigilius against the condemnation of the three chapters, nor the sentences of the Council at large, because they are very long, and would too much interrupt my present purpose, which is only to shew how General Councils exercised the power which they challenged, and how their acts were approved, and that this Council intended to pronounce Vigilius an heretic, and anathematize him as much as if they had named him, which most plainly appears, in that they, taking notice of the reasons and assertions he offered in his constitution, do confute and disallow them, and finally decreed, as has been declared.

If it be asked how this Council was approved: it seems doubtful whether or no Vigilius ever approved it. If he did, then he approved the sentence against himself; but the testimonies of Evagrius and Nicephorus, brought for that purpose, appear rather to relate to Vigilius's epistle§ (in answer to one of Eutychius), wherein he approves, that the three chapters shall be debated, and promises to confer with them about them. But Gregory the Great approved this Synod, who having spoken of the four first General Councils, says, “In like manner I reverence the fifth Synod, wherein the epistle of Ibas, as it

* Numb. 208. [Ibid. p. 128. col. 1.]

† Bar. An. 553. Num. 47. [Ibid. p. 101. col. 1.]

‡ Num. 212. [Ibid. p. 129. col. 2.]

§ Concil. tom. 2. p. 521. a. b. [Labbe, ut supra, vol. v. p. 602.]

is called, full of errors, is condemned.”* I need no more testimonies, because neither Baronius nor Binius disallow its authority.

By virtue of this power, Paschal II. delivered to perpetual anathema† the Emperor Henry IV. by the judgment of the whole Church, as he affirmed, which encouraged his unnatural son to rebel against him, and occasioned wars betwixt them, wherein the father dying, his body was digged out of the grave, which his son suffered to remain five years unburied.

By the same unbounded authority, the fourth General Council at the Lateran under Innocent III.‡ presumed to dispose of kings’ and princes’ dominions, warning temporal lords to purge their dominions of heresy upon pain of excommunication, absolving their subjects from their fidelity, and exposing their lands to the invasion of Catholics. This power, indeed, before and since, has been exercised upon many other accounts than heresy, several of which are observed by our late learned King James I. in his Remonstrance for the Right of Kings.

There are indeed few Councils wherein some have not smarted under this exorbitant power; and to sum up all at once, the General Council at Constance§ claimed to derive their power immediately from Christ, to which all states and dignities, even the Papal, ought to submit in matters of faith, upon pain of condign punishment, to be executed upon them, even by having recourse to other aids of law (by which, I suppose, is meant the secular power), if they repented not, and need so required, which power they soon after exercised upon Pope John XXI. or XXIII. as some style him, whom in their twelfth session they deposed, which sentence he the same session confirmed.

This power obliged Sigismund, king of the Romans, to break his faith with John Huss, and to deliver him over to the will of the Council, contrary to his faith, and safe-conduct given to the said John Huss, for his safe passage to the Council and his return. The Council declaring, “That no safe-conduct given to a heretic, under what covenant soever, by any emperor, kings, or other secular princes, ought to exempt the said heretic from the judgment of his competent ecclesiastical judge, who may punish him, though he come to the place of

* Lib. 1. Epist. 24. Ant. 1615. [Labbe, *ibid.* vol. 2. p. 1046.]

† Urspergens. Abba. Chron. p. 241, &c. Basil. 1569.

‡ Bin. tom. 3. par. 2. p. 1451. b. [Labbe, *can.* 3. *ibid.* vol. xi. part 1. p. 148.]

§ Bin. tom. 3. par. 2. p. 1501. a.

judgment, confiding in that safe-conduct, without which he would not have come."* Accordingly, the King's breach of faith cost John Huss his life, who was condemned in the twelfth session, and burned for heresy, during the fifteenth session of that General Council.

Of the approbation of the above-mentioned celebrated Lateran Council, consisting of four hundred bishops and eight hundred other Fathers, &c. as Binius says, I shall need say nothing, it being owned by the Council of Trent. But, how that at Constance was approved, I shall declare when I come to speak more particularly of the acts thereof.

In the meantime I think I have evidently demonstrated that force was not first practised at Milan or Sirmium, and that it ended not there; but that the authority challenged by General Councils is as unbounded as the world; no power on earth can stand before it, the natural duty of children towards their parents, the oaths and allegiance of subjects to their lawful princes, though in other cases most sacred, and the faith of princes to their subjects must yield to it, and when they stand in the way of it, are no more binding than Sampson's cords; and to that end princes, children or subjects must become the instruments of General Councils, to be employed by them according as they shall have occasion to make use of them.

So the Council at Nice made use of Constantine to establish the true faith; and so the Arians in the Councils at Milan and Sirmium made use of Constantius to destroy it. For that he was their instrument, and not they his, will, I think, sufficiently appear by undoubted testimony.

I will begin with Athanasius, whose unjust persecution by Constantius will, if nothing else would, free him from all suspicion of partiality towards him.

They,† says he, (speaking of the Arians) contrary to the mind of King Constantius, who was most pious and courteous, published and acted what they pleased: and again, speaking how he was enslaved to the impiety of those about him: Constantius,‡ says he, being such a person, one should rather commiserate him, who, under the appearance of freedom, was a servant to those who drew him according to their impious pleasure. Gregory Nazianzen§ also, a champion of unshaken fidelity, during the dangerous reigns of Constantius and Julian,

* Sess. 19. [Labbe, *ibid.* vol. 12. p. 169.]

† Tom. 1. p. 288.

§ Par. 1638. [vol. 1. p. 158. Par. 1778.]

‡ Tom. 1. p. 857.

in his second oration against Julian, excuses Constantius, saying, that if he seemed to swerve from the true faith, that crime was to be imputed to the folly and pravity of those in power, who possessing his simple, weak in piety, and not-far-discerning mind, led it at their will, and upon pretence of sincerity, effected their malicious zeal.

Epiphanius, a Father of the Church at that time, of whom St. Augustine says, that he was praised for his soundness in the orthodox faith, gives this character of Constantius,* that he who otherwise was in many respects good and pious, in this alone erred, that he walked not in the faith of his father, which thing was not his fault, but the fraud of some, who must give an account at the day of judgment.

If it be objected, that force is lawful in a General Council to establish the true faith, but not to support heresy, I answer, that this is so improper an objection to be made by a Romanist; that (did I not know the dexterity of some to pervert reason, through the false light they shew it by), I should not mention it, lest any one should think that I only choose such as I can easily answer; because if it be a good one, it can only serve to overthrow the infallibility; for all General Councils, having the same unquestionable authority in definitions of faith, and interpretation of Scriptures, for any one to judge that any such General Council decrees heresy, is to take the power of defining the true faith, and interpreting Scriptures, out of their hands, to whom only, say they, it belongs; and transfer it to private persons. If another General Council has condemned this, and defined the contrary, one of them must be necessarily supposed to have erred in matter of faith, and consequently not infallible; and it must be left to the judgment of private persons, which of them made the true definition, and interpreted Scriptures aright.

This the author of the *Papist Misrepresented and Represented* seems to allow, when he says, "that the faith of his Church can receive no additions; and that he is obliged to believe nothing, besides what Christ taught and his Apostles; and if any thing contrary to this should be defined, and commanded to be believed, even by ten thousand Councils, he believes it damnable in any one to receive it."

This is so large a grant, that it absolutely overthrows their infallibility; for the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles being

* *Adver. Hæres.* tom. 2. p. 737. Par. 1622.

all contained in the Scriptures, for a private person, as that author is, to judge of that, is to make himself an interpreter of the Scriptures; and for him to judge what are additions of the faith of his Church, is to take away such a part of the infallibility, as that he may, whenever he pleases, take away the rest, by saying, that any definition of faith declared by any General Council is an addition thereto. But the author thought fit to revoke this grant by an explanation, being, it may be, aware of these dangerous consequences; howsoever, he cannot thereby avoid others as bad; for if the affirmation of any General Synod, that it delivers only the ancient faith according to the Scriptures, be a sufficient reason for Christians to receive its decrees, why should not the Creed at Sirmium, of which we have spoken, be allowed? For the bishops there did not pretend to make any additions to the faith therein, but alleged the Scripture for its authority. If their own affirmation only is not sufficient, then why should the Protestants be obliged to receive many definitions (which they judge additions) of faith in the Council of Trent? For certainly that had the form and appearance of a General Council more than this; it had the concurrence of Pope Liberius, as has been already proved: it was assembled by the Emperor Constantius, who had a larger share of Christendom than all the princes who consented to this, and had a greater number of bishops than this when it was fullest.

Pietro Soave Polano, a Father of incomparable learning, great judgment, and integrity, of the Roman Communion, and besides, contemporary with the Tridentine Synod, testifies,* that Laynez the Jesuit (declaring in one of their congregations, that it was not the number of bishops, which may all err, but the Pope's confirmation, that can give authority to a General Council and its decrees) affirmed, that in this Council under Paul III. principal articles were defined concerning canonical books, interpretations, parity of traditions with the Scriptures, by a number of five, or a less, &c.

Binius reckons but two cardinals, about five and forty archbishops and bishops, and four abbots, and generals, that were present in their thirteenth session, wherein the real presence, *viz.* deity and humanity of our blessed Saviour, was concluded to be contained under the species of the elements in the Eucharist, the doctrine of transubstantiation; and that the

* History Counc. of Trent, p. 613.

same adoration which is due to the true God, ought to be paid to the Sacrament, with several other doctrines, and anathemas to the contradictors of them, were decreed. The whole number, at their dissolution (together with the ambassadors, cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, abbots, proctors of the absent, and generals of orders), were in all but two hundred and fifty, as Binius says, which was short of the number of bishops only in divers Councils that are rejected.

And as for their practices; if that at Sirmium deserved to be called a Conventicle of Satan, he that considers the arts, secret policies and contrivances used by the popes, princes, and prelates, to circumvent and overreach one another in the Council of Trent, can surely never think it ought to be styled a Holy Synod, assisted by the Holy Ghost.

When it was carried by the majority in the congregation, that residency was by Divine institution, upon the legate's sending to know the Pope's pleasure, before they would make a decree therein, they who were for such residency, grievously complained, and said, that the Synod of Trent was guided by the Holy Ghost, sent thither from time to time in a cloak-bag from Rome:* the prelates of that party likewise complained of the Pope and Court; that he held the Council in servitude, which ought to be free; that there were such limitations and corrections, that they cannot truly be called a Council; that there were in the Council more than forty stipendiaries of the Pope, some receiving thirty, some forty crowns a month, and others were terrified by letters from cardinals and other courtiers.

The Pope, on the other hand, accused the Council, saying, that it is plain,† that the prelates went to Trent with commission from their princes, according to which they proceed; that the ambassadors by letters and persuasions, do compel them to follow the interest of their masters: and yet for all this, no man saith, which should be said, that the Council is not free.

It evidently appears, through the whole management, that they too justly accused each other of indirect proceeding; for when the Pope heard that forty of the French prelates were expected in the Council, who he thought would be against his interests, he dispatched away to the Council all the bishops remaining in Rome, loading them with promises, and giving money to those which were poor, to increase the number of his

* Soav. Polano, pag. 496. pa. 507, &c.

† Pag. 503.

party against the time that Residence should be debated ; and to secure the French, he offered King Charles IX. to give him an hundred thousand crowns, and lend him as much more,* that nothing in the Council should be handled against his authority, &c. ; which shewed, that he trusted as much in his money, as in the Holy Ghost, to secure it. That the prelates that opposed him, were guided by the commands of their princes, is sufficiently evident. But to set down the transactions of this nature on each side, would be little less labour than to transcribe a whole history, which also is sufficiently known ; and therefore I shall only add the ground of their difference, which was this : that the German, Spanish, and French prelates, maintained that Episcopacy and Residence were of Divine institution.

Which doctrine the late Popes very much dreaded, because they believed it would make way to advance the authority of Councils above that of Popes (according to the decrees of the General Councils of Constance and Basil, to which the French did much adhere), and not a little diminish their power over bishops out of Council.

So that, upon the whole matter, I can see no reason why the acts of Liberius and the Council at Sirmium, should not have as much authority with those who hold infallibility, as the decrees of Trent.

But now, having thus shewn that the Sirmian Council, so far as Liberius consented to it, must lay hold upon the Romanists, I proceed to shew, that their second Creed, to which it does not appear that Liberius subscribed, ought yet, according to the received principles of the Roman Church, to be admitted.

For suppose it wanted that which some would have to be the essential sanction, the confirmation of the Pope ; if this be a sufficient cause to reject it, I would know, whether the second General Council of Constantinople was to be rejected, when it had determined against the decree of Pope Vigilius, pronounced him a heretic, and accursed him, as we have shewn before ? Pope Gregory, indeed, did at length approve it : but I would fain know what was to have been thought of it before ; but upon this and many other such instances, I am content to lay no great stress, because it is something plain to me, that I can produce the authority of General Councils confirmed by Popes, obliging the Church, and the Pope himself to submit to General Councils. It is true, there is the same authority of

Popes and Councils, the quite contrary way ; but that does but help to carry on my argument the better ; for the more contradictions there are between Councils, that arise in the pursuance of this inquiry, the more evidently it will appear, that it is impossible their definitions should be a rule of faith.

For this matter, therefore, I appeal to the decrees of the General Councils of Constance and Basil, who challenge their power to be derived immediately from Christ, and which every one of whatsoever state and dignity, even the Papal, ought to obey in matters of faith, &c. They also declare, that whosoever, of what dignity or quality soever, even the Papal, which shall contumaciously refuse to obey this or any other General Council legitimately called, upon the premises, shall be subject to due penance, &c.

Now if it be the Pope's duty to obey the decrees of General Councils in matters of faith, then (though his consent is desirable, as is also the unanimous concurrence of every particular member thereof, because the perfect harmony of the parts adds no small lustre to the beauty of Christ's Church) it no more follows that the Council can determine nothing without him, than it does, that they can act nothing without an universal consent ; for it would be most absurd, to think that our blessed Saviour should give authority to General Councils to determine every thing in matters of faith, and yet it should be in the power of one man, who ought to obey, to hinder them from determining anything therein. If therefore I shall fully prove that the Councils of Constance and Basil were lawfully assembled, and that their decrees had such approbation and confirmation, as was ever counted sufficient to make the decrees of any General Council of unquestionable authority in the Romish Church ; then, I hope, it must be undeniably granted, that either the decrees of the Synod at Sirmium, ought to be undoubtedly received by that Church, though they had not the Pope's confirmation ; or, that if that Church does not receive those decrees, the Church of England may with as good reason reject the decrees of the Council of Trent, or any other General Council, if they do not find them warranted by Scripture, notwithstanding any pretence of infallibility, which (though there were no other proof) will by this alone appear vain and groundless.

I will therefore forbear to examine any other more ancient Councils, but begin to inquire into those at Constance and

Basil, and how their decrees were confirmed; I shall only first make a short narrative of the cause, for which the Council of Constance was assembled.

The Roman Church having been many years rent and distracted by the schisms of several pretenders to the Papacy (whose titles it is needless here to recount), who, severally, in all places under their obedience, continued to create cardinals, priests, and deacons, and to exercise Papal jurisdiction, notwithstanding the interposition, and great endeavours of many princes and cardinals to compose the schism so shamefully scandalous to their Church.* upon the death of Alexander V. one of the pretenders, the cardinals at Rome chose John XXIII. who, by the exhortation of the Emperor, assembled this Council at Constance, to compose this schism of six and thirty years continuance.

The Council in the fifth session does declare, "That being a General Council, lawfully congregated in the Holy Ghost, and representing the catholic Church, it has power immediately from Christ, to which every one, of whatsoever state and dignity, even the Papal, is obliged to obey in things appertaining to faith, and extirpation of the said schism, and reformation of the said Church in its head and members."

Also it declares, "That every person (of whatsoever condition, state, or dignity, though it be the Papal), who shall contumaciously refuse to obey the mandates, statutes, or ordinations, or precepts of this sacred Synod, and of every other General Council, legitimately called, upon the premises or matters thereto belonging (done or to be done), except he repent, shall be subject to condign penance, and shall be duly punished, even by having recourse, if there be need, to other aids of law."

The Council made several other decrees to limit the Papal power, and objected many heinous crimes against this present Pope John; whereupon he, fearing they might determine severely against him, fled in disguise, first to Schaphusa, and after to Friburg.

Then the Council inquired into the cause of his flight, and chose certain judges, grave and very learned men, who should discuss the crimes objected against him, and relate them in order to the Council. There were above forty articles proved against him, many of which were of the foulest nature imaginable, *viz.* that affecting the Papacy, he contrived to poison

* Bin. tom. 3. Part 2. p. 1555.

his predecessor Alexander V. and his physician; that he committed adultery with his brother's wife, and other married women; that he deflowered holy nuns and virgins, and committed other crimes of incontinency: for which, and because he appeared not upon several proclamations, he was in the tenth session suspended from all papal jurisdiction and administration.

Afterwards, he was by the diligence of the Council taken and imprisoned near Constance. Then the Council deputed certain bishops, and others, with sufficient witness, to shew him the articles, and to demand of him, if he would, either by confessing or denying them, make any defence, or offer any allegation or opposition to the process against him.

Which thing they performed accordingly. But he answered, that he would not make or offer any; but would in all things conform himself to the determination of the sacred Council; and moreover, did consent to all manner of process made by the same Council against him, asserting, that he would make no other answer to the foresaid articles; affirming, that the Council of Constance was most holy, and could not err. Then one of the deputies offered him a copy of the articles, to the end, that if he would, he might object against them, or any of them; to which he answered again, that he would submit himself to the Council, which he knew could not err. Then one of the deputies added, "Holy Father, we have moreover commission to assign you a time, when the Council will pronounce a definitive sentence against you (upon all and singular the crimes, for which the Council has proceeded against you), as the nature and quality thereof shall require; therefore we appoint you to-morrow to hear the definitive sentence."

But John, as it seemed, not desiring to appear, answered, "I am very well pleased with the sentence, and as much as in me lies, confirm and approve it; and likewise, I confirm, approve, and ratify all the process, and whatsoever has been acted against me in the Council, and I promise that I will never hereafter contradict the same."

Then the deputies returned, and made relation of these things to the Council, who thereupon proceeded to pronounce a definitive sentence against him, and for his departure from the Council, and his detestable, wicked, and incorrigible manner of life, both before his promotion to the Papacy, and afterwards, notoriously scandalizing the Church, and all good Christians; they deposed him. Which sentence, being

shewed him the next day but one, by the deputies appointed by the Council, he in most ample manner confirmed.

Soon after this, the Cardinal Ragusinus and Carolus de Malatestis, came with full power and authority to them and others, directed from Gregory XII. another pretender to the Papacy (who, though formerly deposed by the Council at Pisa, continued to exercise Papal jurisdiction in places under his obedience), in his name to convoke, authorize and confirm the Council, and to renounce the Papacy; provided Balthasar, calling himself John XXIII. was not present, nor presided therein. The substance of which confirmation, &c. was contained in a bull, dated March 3, A. D. 1415.

Another bull was directed to Charles Malatesta, of the same date, giving more particularly to him, full authority to act in his name, as he should see cause, and confirming all his proceedings, though they should exceed his commission and present instructions.

These two bulls being read in the Council, Malatesta assigned over his powers of authorizing and approving the Council to Cardinal Ragusinus, who thereupon did convoke that sacred General Council, and did authorise all things to be acted by it; which convocation, authorization and confirmation were, for unity's sake, allowed by the Council.

In their fortieth session, they resolved on the manner of electing a new Pope, and the next session, Cardinal Odo, or Otho de Columna, according to the same form, was elected by the name of Martin V.

In April following, the Council was dissolved, at which dissolution, Martin declared, "That all and singular the acts determined, concluded and decreed in matters of faith, by the present Council, he would synodically hold, and inviolably observe, and never contradict them in any manner; and the same so synodically acted, he did approve and ratify, and not otherwise, nor in any other manner." And this he ordered to be repeated, and required public instruments to be made by the protonotaries and notaries, deputed to write the Acts of the Council.

Here we see the decrees of this Council confirmed first by John XXIII. submitting and conforming himself to the Council, and declaring that it "was most holy, and could not err." Then they were confirmed by Gregory XII. as has been shewed; and lastly, by Martin V.; who for a further confirmation thereof, writing to the archbishops, bishops, and the

inquisitors of heresy, amongst other directions to find out heretics, and try such as were suspected of heresy; and to the end that none might continue in ignorance, or cunningly pretend it; he, by approbation of the sacred Council, sent the articles against John Wickliff and John Huss, with interrogatories fitted to the same, whereto every suspected person should answer upon oath. Amongst which interrogatories were,* “Whether he did believe, hold, and assert, that every General Council, and also that at Constance, did represent the universal Church? Also, whether he believed, that that which the sacred Council of Constance, representing the universal Church, does approve in favour of the faith, for the salvation of souls, the same ought to be approved, and held by all Christ’s faithful people; and that what it did, and does condemn, as contrary to faith and good manners, ought by the same faithful people, to be held and believed as condemned?”

Thus the decrees were confirmed by all the pretenders, except Peter de Luna, called by those under his obedience, Benedict XI or XIII., as some say; but he was schismatically elected, and not reckoned amongst the legitimate Popes, by either Platina, Onuphrius, or Binius; he was deposed, first in a Council at Pisa, and afterwards in the thirty-seventh session of this Council. as perjured, schismatical, and a heretic. He had only two cardinals that adhered to him to the last, who, when he died, did, by the instigation of Alphonsus king of Arragon, create Ægidius Munionis Pope, and called him Clement VIII. who presently created cardinals, and exercised other acts of Papal authority. But four years after, Alphonsus being reconciled to Martin, Ægidius, at the command of Alphonsus, divested himself of the Papacy, and was made bishop of Majorca by Martin, which put an end to that schism of fifty years continuance.

This Council, in the nine and thirtieth session, decreed, that the first General Council after that, should be celebrated within five years after the dissolution of the Synod at Constance; the second within seven years after the dissolution of the first; and, after the dissolution of the second, from ten years to ten years General Councils should be perpetually celebrated. The Pope, a month before the dissolution of every General Council, was, with the approbation of the Council, to appoint the place where the next should be held; which

* Bin. tom. 3. Part 2. p. 1655.

thing, if the Pope neglected to do, the Council was to assign the place. These times the Pope, by advice of the cardinals, might abbreviate, but in no wise prorogue. With the consent, and subscription of two parts of his cardinals, the Pope might also, for urgent reasons, change the place appointed; but the abbreviation of time, and alteration of place, the Pope was obliged to publish a year before the time formerly prefixed. According to this decree, Martin, in the four and fortieth session, with the consent of the Council, appointed Pavia to be the place where the next Council should be celebrated, which was assembled by Martin, and was translated to Sienna, and there the city of Basil was appointed to be the place, where, after seven years, the next General Council should be held.

When that time drew near, Martin being indisposed through age and infirmities, constituted Cardinal Julian to be his legate, *de latere*, to preside in the said Council, but died soon after.

Eugenius IV. formerly called Gabriel Gondelmerius succeeded him. He also appointed Cardinal Julian to preside in that Council, who accordingly began it with all the accustomed forms and ceremonies.

In their second session, that Council made and confirmed the two formerly mentioned decrees of the fifth session of the Council of Constance, subjecting the Pope to the General Councils in matters of faith, &c.; and moreover declared and decreed, that being legitimately congregated for the extirpation of heresy, and for the general reformation of the manners of the Church in its head and its members, it ought not, without its own consent, be dissolved, or transferred to another place, or prorogued to another time, by any authority, no, not the Papal.* And that no authority whatsoever, no not the Papal, ought to hinder any person from coming to the Council, or withdraw or recall any one of the Council from the same. And that no person engaged to be of the Council, should depart without the licence of deputies, appointed to examine the reasons of such as desired leave to withdraw; and those so

* Though Binius in his Notes on this Council, says, that Eugenius recalled his legate, who thereupon left the Council, yet it appears in the 13th session, when Eugenius was, after many monitions, accused of contumacy by the promoters of the Council, that then Julian was personally there, and sat and acted there as legate of the Apostolic see, and President of the Council. Pius the Second says, that he forsook the Council, and after returned, but at last wholly forsook it, and went over to Eugenius. Tom. 4. Bi. p. 514.

departing, should leave their powers with others which stayed. Upon which decrees, Engenius recalled Julian his legate, and dissolved the Council, who thereupon, in the third session, sent orators to him, to entreat and require him to revoke the said dissolution : but the Council not receiving a satisfactory answer, declared, that that dissolution was contrary to the decrees of the Council of Constance, tended to the overthrow of the faith, the scandal of Christianity, and was void. Then repeating the first decree of the fifth session of the Council of Constance, declaring the Pope subject to General Councils in matters of faith, they sent a monition against Eugenius,* and the cardinals with him, wherein, first repeating the second decree of the fifth session of Constance, declaring the Pope subject to condign punishment, if he disobeyed any General Council in matters of faith, &c. they, with all reverence and earnestness, beseech, require, and warn the Pope, to revoke the pretended dissolution in as public a manner as he had published it, and that he would not only wholly desist from any ways obstructing the said Council, but further and assist the same, and personally appear there in three months, or, if necessarily hindered, that he would depute one, or more, with full power, to confirm whatsoever should be transacted in the said Council. If he neglected to perform these things, then the Council will provide for the necessities of the Church, and proceed accordingly, as by divine and human laws they are obliged. The Council beseeches, admonishes and requires, the cardinals to attend and assist the same, otherwise they will proceed against them in such manner as the necessity of the Church, and divine and human laws shall require.

In several other sessions they assert their authority to continue, and declare the Pope's power void, either to dissolve or prorogue that without their consent, or erect another General Council whilst that was sitting. Eugenius is accused of contumacy by the promoters of the Council in the tenth session ; in the eleventh it is, amongst several things, declared, that if the Pope continues his endeavours in any manner to impede, change, prorogue, or dissolve the Council, and shall not repent, and make real satisfaction within four months, he shall forthwith be suspended from administration of the Papal dignity, which administration shall devolve to the Council, and if he persist in his obstinacy two months after the foresaid four

* Bin. tom. 4. p. 22.

months, then the Council will proceed to deprive him totally. The Council also decreed, that it should not be in the power of any, no not the Pope, to dissolve, or translate the said Council from place to place, without the consent of two parts of the same, declared in open session.

In the twelfth session the Council decrees a citation against Eugenius, wherein is at large set forth, the great necessity of General Councils, the great moderation and humility of their proceedings and addresses to Eugenius, and his obstinate behaviour towards them, which because they perceive he daily increases, being encouraged by their patience and delay, they are resolved to use sharper remedies. And though they might proceed to a final sentence against one so notoriously and obstinately scandalizing the Church; notwithstanding, out of maternal piety and at the request of the Emperor Sigismund, they do the third time most earnestly entreat, warn, cite, and require, and in the name of Almighty God, do now lastly and peremptorily command him, absolutely to revoke the said pretended and notoriously scandalous dissolution, and that he would declare, that this sacred Council of Basil, legally begun, according to the decrees of the General Council of Constance, and the approbation of Pope Martin V. and of Eugenius himself, has continued and always proceeded, and ought to have continuance and proceeding from the time of the beginning, and that he would purely, sincerely, and effectually adhere to the same, and that he would notify this revocation, declaration, and sincere concurrence, by his letters to the Council, sealed after the manner of the Roman Court, within sixty days. Which things, if he shall fully and effectually perform, within the limited time, they will yield him all due honour. But if he continue obstinate, the said sixty days being elapsed, then the holy Synod, by the power which they challenge to have from Almighty God, do suspend the said Eugenius, as contumacious and incorrigible, from all Papal administration in spirituals and temporals; and, if there shall be occasion, without further citation, they will proceed to a final sentence against him, and they declare and decree, that then all right of administration of the Papacy does devolve to the sacred synod, and they decree all acts done by Eugenius, after those sixty days, as Pope, to be null and void; and they require, and in God's name command all kings, princes, and persons of what degree or dignity soever, whether secular, or ecclesiastical, to yield no obedience to the said Eugenius,

during the said suspension, upon pretext of any oath, allegiance, or promise of fealty whatsoever.

In the thirteenth session, the said sixty days being expired without satisfaction given to the Council, the promoters again accuse Eugenius of contumacy. Then the Archbishop of Spalata, and the Bishop of Servio, ambassadors from Eugenius, appeared on his behalf, declaring that the term of sixty days was not fully ended; therefore the Council ought not then to proceed against him. To whom Julian,* cardinal of St. Angelo, in the name of the whole Council, replied, that the term of sixty days was that day expired; and the promoters of the Council, pursuant to the monitory decree, had accused the Pope of contumacy, because he had not satisfied the Council in such manner as was prescribed: but they had as yet proceeded no further against him. Therefore, in the name of the Council, he required of them, that if he had satisfied the Council, or they, in his name, had authority so to do, they would acquaint them. For if it were so, the Fathers of the Council would receive his concurrence with great joy, and sing *Te Deum*. But, if otherwise, the reverend Fathers would rather choose death, than suffer the Church of God to be endangered upon the pretence of such a dissolution.

He added, That, at the earnest request of the Emperor Sigismund, the Council had prorogued the term of sixty days, to thirty days longer, from that day, upon the same penalties and conditions contained in the former decree of citation.

Then the ambassadors, having no authority to satisfy the Council, were dismissed, and the Council set forth another citation, as they before had resolved, much like the former.

At the end of the said thirty days the Emperor arrived at Basil, and then, at the fourteenth session, the Council prorogued the monition to ninety days longer, but with this condition, that if he did not effectually perform all and singular the contents of one of the three forms of adhesion, prescribed him by the Council, within that time, the penalties, contained in the decrees of monition, shall be understood to be inflicted upon him.

Eugenius being alarmed by these great preparations against him, and finding himself incapable to support, or any longer to avoid or ward the dreadful blow, submitted himself within

* The Pope's Legate, and by him and Martin appointed to preside, with apostolical authority.

the limited time, in such manner, that the Council declared themselves abundantly satisfied.*

The Contents of his Letter to the Council, were :

“That he had, by the advice and consent of his cardinals, for certain causes dissolved the Council of Basil, which was legitimately begun according to the decrees of the General Councils of Constance and Sienna, and the appointments of Martin V. and himself, for the extirpation of heresies, the peace of Christendom, and the general reformation of the Church in its head and members, and what appertained to them. But seeing that great dissensions have risen, and greater may arise, by occasion of the said dissolution, he, by the advice and consent of his cardinals, declares, that the said Council was legitimately continued, and always proceeded, and ought always to be continued, and ~~to~~ proceed in relation to the premises, and all things pertaining thereto, from the time of its beginning, as if there had been no dissolution. Moreover, he declares the said dissolution void, and that he does and will attend the sacred Council of Basil, plainly and effectually, with all devotion and favour. Besides, that the integrity and devotion of his mind towards the universal Church, and the sacred General Council of Basil, may evidently appear to all men, he does revoke, make void, and annul, his two letters formerly published in his Court; and a third likewise, because it was desired, though he denied that it was composed or published by him, his advice or knowledge, and he declares that they were, and are, null and void, as also all other things done by him, or in his name, to the prejudice or in derogation of the said sacred General Council of Basil, or whatever has been done, attempted, or asserted against his authority, and does declare, that he will henceforward desist from offering any novelty, grievance or prejudice to the sacred Council, the members or adherents thereof.”

* Sess. 16. [Labbe, vol. 12, p. 528, &c.] The Pope's ambassadors were received in the Council, April 8, 1434, and did then swear to labour faithfully for the state and honour of the Council of Basil, and to defend and maintain its decrees, and especially the decrees of the Council of Constance, declaring the Pope subject to the decrees of that and every other General Council, in matters of faith, and punishable, if he contumaciously refuse to obey them.

This I find in the Appendix, p. 161 [Ibid. p. 1525], to be the 17th session, but sure it is rather the 16th session, and April 24, as appears after.

The Substance of the first Letter or Bull, which Eugenius revoked, was :

“ That whereas, for certain causes, he had formerly dissolved the Council, which some said was assembled at Basil, and intended to transfer it to Bononia : those causes afterwards ceasing, he decreed by his legates, which should preside in his name, at Basil, that the said Council ought to continue there. But whereas they who were and are assembled at Basil, even after the said dissolution and decree, and also before the arrival of his legates, not minding the public good, but their private passions, and not supported by the authority of the Apostolic see, presume to dispose, ordain, appoint, confirm, declare and command, to the great prejudice of him, the Apostolic see, and the cardinals, &c. contrary to the decrees of the holy Fathers, and the canonical sanctions, as if they, though he contradicted them, had the authority of a General Synod ; he considering, that if he should pass over in silence those things which they had so perversely decreed and done, it would tend to the great and evident prejudice of the Church and the Apostolic see, the great scandal of very many, and to the nourishing of schism and heresy ; and moreover, being by his pastoral office obliged to provide present remedies against future evils, he does, by the tenor of these presents, declare and decree, by his Apostolic authority, and by the advice and assent of his cardinals, all the acts, ordinances, confirmations, decrees, and declarations, made by those persons assembled at Basil, *viz.* the citations, processes, and sentences, the statutes and decrees concerning him the said Eugenius, or against him, or against the rights and liberty of him, and the Apostolic see, and the venerable cardinals, and those things which they acted before the arrival of his legates, and whatsoever shall for the future be decreed by them, beyond the power granted them by his letters, to be void and of none effect, &c. Dated at Rome, 1433, 4th Cal. Aug. the third year of his Pontificate.”

The Substance of the second Bull, which Eugenius revoked, was :

“ That whereas the persons assembled at Basil, published a pretended decree, requiring him, upon the penalties therein contained, entirely to adhere to them within sixty days, and required the cardinals with him, in case he refused, within

twenty days after the said sixty days, upon the penalty of privation of all their offices, &c. to forsake the Roman Court; he declares and decrees the said pretended Council, and all therein contained, to be utterly void, and of none effect."

The third bull, which he revoked to satisfy the Council, though he utterly denied that it was published by him, his knowledge, or consent, endeavours to clear him from the accusations of the Council, charging him, that, to introduce scandal and disturbance into the Church of God, he attempted to dissolve the Council of Basil, which he ought not to have done without the consent thereof, &c.

These three bulls being revoked on the 24th of April, 1434, the Pope's legates, *viz.* Nicolaus, cardinal of the Holy Cross, the Archbishop of Tarentum, the Bishop of Padua, and the Abbot of St. Justin, were incorporated into the Council: but it was ordered, that, at the incorporation of the Pope's orators, they should swear faithfully to labour for the state and honour of this sacred Council, and to maintain its decrees, especially the decree of the fifth session of the sacred Council of Constance, subjecting Popes to the General Councils in matters of faith, and declaring Popes subject to punishment, if they disobeyed the decrees of that or any other General Council in matters of faith.

In the seventeenth session Nicolaus, of the title of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, Julian of Saint Angelo, cardinals, John, archbishop of Tarentum, Peter, bishop of Padua, and Ludovicus, abbot of Saint Justin, were admitted by the Council to preside therein, in the name and place of Eugenius, upon certain conditions and clauses, which should continue in force throughout, *viz.* that they should have no coactive jurisdiction: that the orders of proceeding in the Council, hitherto observed, should still continue, especially those articles of September 26, 1430, which ordained how matters were to be prepared and debated in the general sessions.

The Council* again confirmed and renewed the decrees of the Council of Constance, mentioned before in the sixteenth session of this Council, subjecting the Pope to the decrees of every General Council, in matters of faith, &c. Three days before this, Eugenius sends an epistle to his venerable brothers and beloved sons, assembled in the sacred Council at Basil, to this purpose:

* Sess. 18. June 25, 1434.

That though any one might judge,* by former proceedings, that his mind was not altogether free from clouds ; yet if what has been offered them from him, by his orators, especially of late, be duly considered, the serenity of his heart may be sufficiently discerned : that he always had the same design which they had ; he only differed from them in the place of celebrating the Council, he always desired peace, and the reformation of the Church ; and for this reason he not only yielded to them, but also by his letters consented to their decree, according as they did dictate. His purpose and desire is to love them as sons, and observe them as brothers, and he doubts not, but that they will preserve faithful and devout hearts to the Apostolic see. This his confidence, he says, is grounded upon the joy they expressed upon his consent to the sacred General Council ; and upon his hearing, that his presidents were now so united with them in affection and endeavours, that they seemed almost to be one.

February the 16th, 1435, he writes this epistle † to his legates, presidents of the Council :

“ It is not unusual for the enemy of mankind to sow tares, that even amongst those who contend with equal piety, that they may meet in the same end (out of the very methods of proceeding, which differ according to the diversities of human capacity), contentions may arise to wound mutual charity. This formerly we have perceived to have happened betwixt us and some of the venerable brothers and beloved sons of the sacred General Council of Basil, which by divine clemency, at last, was peaceably agreed. Afterwards, as if some new difference had risen betwixt us and them, we were required by new orators of that General Council, concerning the observation of their conclusion with the Greeks, concerning giving indulgences, not admitting the causes of the members of the said Council, not calling our officials to our courts, concerning elections to be expected or confirmed, concerning not receiving annates and commune services. To all which we fully answered by our orators ; and though, by those answers, we may hope to have satisfied the sacred Council, we judged it not needless, if any difficulty, or scruple, or suspicion, should happen to remain, to provide more fully, and more amply to manifest our desire of peace and unity, so that every little cloud being removed, we may with united and serene minds pursue those

* F. Con. Append. p. 214, June 22, 1434.

† Bas. Con. Append. p. 214.

things which concern the honour of God, and the good of the Christian commonwealth. These things being considered, we, with the advice of our cardinals, by the tenor of these presents, do grant full and free power to your care (of which we have great confidence), to remove, quiet, and agree, all and singular the differences, difficulties and suspicions, if any, as we said, on the forementioned occasions, do yet remain, or shall hereafter happen to arise, with sufficient provision nevertheless first made, as to annates and common services, and other things contained in an ordination of the same General Council, and received and approved by the nations and provinces. And also to do other things in and about the premises, which you shall judge may produce true and perfect charity betwixt us, and our brothers and sons, to the glory of God, the exaltation of the orthodox Christian faith, and the conservation of the honour and dignity of the Apostolic see; and we will accept and ratify whatsoever in the premises, shall be ordered, agreed and concluded by you."

Notwithstanding that these differences seemed to be so fairly composed, and such provision made to prevent new ones, that none could interpose to interrupt their proceedings, yet the Emperor, and Patriarch of Constantinople, being to come to the Council, in order to unite theirs with the Roman Church, the Council and Pope so quarrelled about the choice of the place where the meeting should be that it caused a final breach betwixt them. They grievously charged one another: * he them, with obstructing the union by their inconstancy, and choice of a place disapproved by the Greeks, and injuriously and ignominiously treating one of his legates: for which, and other causes, he transfers the Council to Ferrara.† They send out a monition and citation against him,‡ wherein, though they style him "most holy," yet they accuse him of simony, perjury, and other heinous crimes, and peremptorily command him to appear before them within sixty days:§ but he not appearing in that term,|| is declared contumacious, and, amongst other crimes, is accused of breach of faith, in endeavouring, by translating the Council, to violate a decree, by himself approved,¶ in which it is resolved, that the Council shall firmly remain at Basil, till such time as the Grecians shall arrive at that port, which this synod shall name.

* Bas. Con. Append. p. 215.

† Sess. 26.

§ Sess. 28.

|| Sess. 29.

† Sept. 17, 1437.

¶ Sess. 19.

Eugenius, in the thirty-first session,* is by the Council suspended from all Papal jurisdiction, both spiritual and temporal.

In the thirty-fourth session he is, as contumacious, disobedient, a contemner and violater of the holy canons of the Councils, a disturber of the peace and unity of the Church, simoniacal, perjured, incorrigible, schismatical, pertinaciously heretical, &c. deposed from all pontifical administration, title, degree, honour and dignity, &c.

In the thirty-fifth session † it was decreed that the Council of Basil could by no means be dissolved, but by consent of two parts of the same.

In the thirty-eighth session the Council order the manner of electing a new Pope, and appoint a form of an oath, to be taken by him at his election, wherein, amongst other things, he engages to observe the decrees of the Councils of Constance and Basil.

In the thirty-eighth session ‡ the Council declares against an invective, set forth by Gabriel, formerly Eugenius, justifying his translation of the Council to Ferrara, and condemning them to have perverted the sense of the Council of Constance, declaring in the thirty-third session these three catholic truths following; as consequences of the decrees of the fourth and fifth sessions of that Council.

First, "The truth of the power of a General Council, representing the universal Church, over the Pope and every other person, declared by the General Councils of Constance and this of Basil, is a truth of the catholic faith."

Secondly, This truth, "that the Pope has no authority to dissolve, to prorogue, or transfer from one place to another, a General Council, without the consent thereof, is a truth of the catholic faith."

Thirdly, "He is to be esteemed an heretic, who does pertinaciously oppose these two foresaid truths."

They add, "that Gabriel does also by obscurity of words, endeavour to perplex the world, saying, that he does condemn those foresaid truths in the sense of the Council of Basil, yet neither does he explain that sense, nor manifest in what sense he approves them, in which, perhaps, he is silent, because he manifestly sees, that the words of the foresaid truths are so clear, that they cannot justly be taxed with any obscurity, or drawn into different senses, and by consequence that first

* Sess. 31.

† Sess. 35.

‡ Sess. 38.

sense, according to which, he says, he does reprobate the said truths, cannot be denied. They declare to all catholics, that they have not, nor intend to have any other sense in their declarations, than that of the Council of Constance; the true catholic sense which they always had in their decrees, made in the second, eleventh, twelfth, twenty-ninth, and other sessions, and in their synodical epistles, and in like manner held by the Cardinals of the Roman Church, the Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, Orators of Princes, Abbots, Doctors, who were at their Synods, and unanimously believed that a General Council has power immediately from Christ, to which the Pope ought to obey, according as the said truth, declared in the Council of Constance, does define; and that this truth is of Divine right, that the Pope has no authority to dissolve, or transfer from one place to another, a General Council legitimately called, without the consent thereof. — Which truths Gabriel himself acknowledged, when after two years' continued obstinacy, in which he endeavoured to justify the said dissolution, he was forced by the commands of the Council, judicially to revoke whatever had been attempted, alleged, or done by him, or in his name, in derogation of the said Council, or its authority; and did acquiesce in the judgment of the Council, presenting judicially before it the form of his confession, according as the Council had ordained. They require all catholics to judge what a great blow the Church of God will receive, if that declaration of the Council of Constance be called in question, by whose vigour and irresistible authority, John XXIII. or XXIV. according to Platina and Benedict, were deposed, and Martin elected, to whom Eugenius succeeded; by which two, consequently, all creations of cardinals, promotions of prelates, and other ecclesiastical orders and degrees were made."

It cannot be denied, but that the proceedings of these two last Councils, have given such a blow to the Roman Church, that thereby all pretence of infallibility is utterly overthrown; for though the Romanists are so nice and tender in declaring where their supremacy and infallibility is fixed, that the uncertainty makes them useless; though it should be granted that they had them: yet the decrees of the Council of Constance, and this of Basil, place them undeniably in the Council alone. For the Council of Constance challenged that privilege and power; by virtue of which they deposed John XXIII. or XXIV. according to Platina, who submitted,

acknowledged the infallibility of the Council, and confirmed its decrees. Gregory XII. also, when he resigned, impowered Malatesta, and others, to confirm the decrees of the same Council, which was done in his name by Cardinal Ragusinus; and these two were the only persons who had any reasonable pretence to the Pontificate. Afterwards the same Council, by virtue of this power and privilege, elected Martin V. into the Papacy, who likewise, at the dissolution of the Council, confirmed all the decrees thereof, in matters of faith, and promised inviolably to observe, and never to contradict the same; nay, so sacred did he account them,* that to acknowledge that the Council of Constance did represent the universal Church, and that what it did approve in matters of faith and salvation of souls, ought to be held and maintained, and what it condemned, as contrary to faith and good manners, ought to be rejected by all Christ's faithful people, was one of the methods appointed by Martin, during the Council, whereby any one, who was suspected to be guilty of, or to favour the heresies of Wicliff, or Huss, was to purge and clear himself from that suspicion. This Eugenius also, after he had two years obstinately persisted in his endeavours to dissolve the Council, revoked the bulls of dissolution, as has been declared. And that he approved their proceedings, appears by his fore-said epistle to the Council, after his ambassadors had sworn to maintain the honour of the Council and its decrees; and after his presidents were admitted into the Council upon the limitations afore-mentioned. And by his letter to his presidents, dated February 1435, almost a year after that, and eight months after, the Council had in the eighteenth session again repeated the decrees of the Council of Constance before-mentioned.

Platina discerns the fatal consequence of this Pope's submission to the Council (though he takes no notice that three other Popes had done the same), for, he says, Eugenius confounded things divine and human; for he gave authority to the Council of Basil, and by his Apostolical letters, approved their decrees, whence infinite evils have sprung.

And that these decrees might want no confirmation, Nicholas V.† (who succeeded Eugenius, upon the resignation

* Conc. Gen. Bin. tom. 3. Par. 2. p. 1655. Dat. 8. Cat. Mar.

† Bin. Con. Gen. tom. 4. p. 97. The Bull of Nicholas, of his approbation of the acts of the Council of Basil.

of Amadeus, duke of Savoy, whom the Council of Basil had elected Pope, by the name of Felix V. and upon the dissolution of the said Council, who had adjourned to Lausanne, and their acknowledgment of the said Nicholas), did, with the advice of his cardinals, approve, ratify and confirm all and singular what was acted by the ordinaries at both the said places, and denounced the wrath of Almighty God, and the blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, upon any one who should presume to contradict or infringe this bull of his said approbation, ratification, confirmation. Dat. 14, Cal. Jul. 1449.

At this time all the opinions of this visible infallibility and supremacy were only these, that I can find : some said, that they did reside in the General Council and Pope ; some said, in the Pope alone ; and others held, that they were lodged in the General Council alone.

Now these two last Councils challenging them by their often repeated decrees to that purpose, and four Popes confirming those decrees, must unavoidably draw all persons, who were of the two first opinions, to settle in the last, or reject all ; for the use of a visible infallible guide being to quiet all doubts, and avoid all errors in matters of faith, and to direct and lead into the way of truth, the right determining and knowledge who this unerring guide is, must be acknowledged to be, as it were, the cardinal article, chief hinge upon which all the other articles of our faith ought necessarily to move and depend, and indeed ought to be one of the first principles of faith, wherein every Christian should be instructed. It ought to be so certain, stable, and unmovable, as not to be altered, but by the especial and signal command of Almighty God himself ; for any alteration wholly destroys its authority, by setting up another supremacy to control it, which is inconsistent with its nature, especially in this case ; because these Councils challenge the supremacy of General Councils to proceed immediately from Christ, and the Council of Basil pronounces all obstinate opposers to be heretics,* and it were most absurd to imagine, that Christ would empower heretics to dissolve or alter a supreme and infallible guide, which he promised to secure and defend against the gates of hell.

It must therefore unavoidably follow, that if all the pretenders to infallibility and supremacy, agree to place it in any one or more of them, either that it is then rightly placed, and

* Bin. tom. 4. p. 83.

cannot admit of a change (except by God himself), or, if they misplace it, it is an undeniable argument, that all their pretences thereto are vain, and that they act by a forged commission.

Therefore all the arguments urged by this Eugenius, or by Pius II. in his Bull of Retractions, have either no force at all to overthrow these decrees, or if they have any, they equally involve the other pretenders in their ruin.

Now it appears plainly enough from what has been said, that the Roman Church are by the authority of these two General Councils, reduced to a necessity of owning all that has been determined in matters of faith by the General Councils of Milan, Sirmium, Ariminum, the second at Ephesus, and any other whatsoever, whether they had the consent of the Pope or not; or at least, to lay down their claim of having any such universal infallible judge amongst themselves, as they obstinately pretend to have.

But that the fall of this kingdom might be so conspicuous, that all who wilfully closed not their eyes, might easily discern it; it was after in the Lateran Council so divided against itself, that if our blessed Saviour's words have any authority, it must be brought to desolation: for Leo X. not enduring those limitations and curbs, which these two last Councils, with the concurrence and consent of five Popes, put upon the Papal jurisdiction, rather chose totally to confound the supremacy and infallibility of the Church of Rome, than retain them upon such, as he thought, disgraceful terms to him and his successors, as will appear by his decretal Epistle, dated 1516, confirmed by the approbation of the whole Lateran Council (one bishop excepted), wherein he at large declares,* that "the Pragmatical Sanction before mentioned, was in times past, and yet continues in force, to the great scandal and danger of souls, and derogation of the Apostolic See. And though upon many accounts, it was of itself void, and did nourish and maintain schism, and therefore without any citation might have been declared null and invalid. Notwithstanding, out of abundant caution, his predecessor Julius II. and he, had by public edict, cited the abettors thereof to appear before this Council, and shew cause why the said Sanction, with its corruption and abuse in things concerning the Apostolic Church, and the violation of the holy canon and ecclesiastical liberty, ought not

* Bin. tom. 4. p. 639.

to be declared null and void ; and this was several times done, and the execution several times deferred, that no place might be left for an excuse : and yet, though all impediments had been removed, and all terms limited for their appearance were expired, the maintainers of the said Sanction, neither did, nor would appear ; therefore, because it is necessary to salvation, that all Christ's faithful people should be subject to the Bishop of Rome, though some of his predecessors the Popes of Rome, being unable wholly to obviate this corruption and abuse, did seem to tolerate it ; yet considering that* seventy years being scarce run out since the publication of the said Sanction, he can no longer, with a safe conscience, desist from a total extirpation of this wicked Sanction. Nor ought it to move him, that the Sanction itself, and all therein contained, had their rise from the Council of Basil, and at the instance of the same Council, were received and accepted by the assembly at Bourges. Seeing that all those things were done in that Synod, or rather Conventicle, after the translation thereof ; so that it deserved no longer to be called a Council, having no force, because the Pope, having authority over all Councils, has full right and power of assembling, translating, and dissolving them : therefore, notwithstanding the premises, as also the constitutions, decrees, and statutes published by Apostolical or Synodical authority whatsoever, and of certain knowledge often confirmed and approved (they otherwise remaining in their force), he does by the premised tenor abolish the said Sanction ; and concludes, that if any one shall presume to infringe these letters of declaration, revocation, and annulation, he shall incur the indignation of Almighty God, and the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul."

One of the decrees of this Pragmatical Sanction, was,† that the authority of the declarations of the Council of Basil shall be perpetual, which no one, no, not the Pope himself, shall presume to weaken, or take away. Therefore it was a bold stroke in Leo, and the Lateran Council, to abolish the said Sanction as scandalous and wicked, though he confessed, that it had its rise from, and at the instance of the Council of Basil it was received ; one of whose decrees pronounces him to be an heretic, who denies that Popes are subject to General Councils,

* By this he seems to allow, that seventy years would have made a prescription, and indeed, there were seventy-eight years, as appears by the dates of this letter, and the Pragmatical Sanction.

† Bin. tom. 4. p. 410.

and have no authority to dissolve, prorogue, or transfer them, without their consent,

Nor is it sufficient which Leo affirms, that these things were done in the Synod, after the translation thereof: for all things concerning the Pope and Council, which were contained in the Sanction, were decreed by the Council, and confirmed by Eugenius, before the pretended translation; though indeed the Sanction itself was not decreed till after.

Now though this Pope and Council disagreed from the two former Councils, confirmed by, at the least, three Popes, where the supremacy and infallibility ought to be placed; yet in this it is agreed, that the right placing it, is of Divine institution, and the acknowledgment thereof, and obedience thereto, is necessary to salvation. The Council of Constance challenged it above the Pope; and John, who was deposed, declared that it could not err; Martin also, at the dissolution thereof, confirmed all its decrees.

The Council of Basil, on their own behalf, and all other General Councils, claimed the same authority, declaring,* that Eugenius' endeavour to dissolve them, "tended to the notorious scandal of the Christian religion; that the article in debate concerns the faith, which cannot be neglected without destruction to salvation; and that if he will not hear the Church, he ought to be accounted an heathen and a publican." After this, and much more to this purpose, he submitted, in such manner as I have declared.

Now whether the supremacy and infallibility belongs to the General Councils, to whom the Popes ought to obey, or to the Popes above them, it can no ways be demonstrated, without the concurrence of them both, where they ought to be placed.

The decrees of the Council of Basil, challenging them to be in the General Councils above the Popes, and pronouncing those to be heretics who deny their claim, prove they cannot belong to the Popes above the General Councils.

Leo and the Lateran Council, declaring it necessary to salvation, that all Christ's faithful people should be subject to the Bishop of Rome; and that the Pope has authority over all Councils, and denouncing the indignation of Almighty God, &c. against the infringers of that bull, prove they cannot be in the General Councils above the Popes. Therefore this contradiction of each others, may indeed the same authority, over-

* Bin. tom. 4. p. 111, and 113.

throws the common foundation, without which neither title can be supported : so that the pretended supremacy and infallibility is undeniably proved *felo de se* ; and if there is any truth in their several decrees against each other, *viz.* the pronouncing those to be heretics who deny them to the General Councils, and the denouncing the said indignations against those who deny it to the Popes, they only prove, that all they are heretics, or incur the said indignations, who ever have, or ever shall pretend to such authority ; and those are undoubtedly very unfit qualifications for infallible guides to heaven, and for interpreters of holy Scriptures, by the misinterpretation of which they have forged a false commission, and have fallen from the true faith, into so notorious errors.

I think I have now sufficiently proved, that either the Romanists do not think themselves obliged to obey the decrees of every General Council, or that if they do, it is very unsafe for us to follow their examples. I think, likewise, that the inconsistency of their General Councils one with another, is so plain, even about their very title and claim to infallibility, that I might spare any further inquiry therein.

But besides these, as I think, unanswerable objections against the pretended infallibility, there yet remains another, from which, if it be not cleared, it will prove useless. I suppose every one will grant, that to prove an infallible guide useful, it must appear, that that guide has so plainly interpreted Scriptures, and made such clear definitions of faith, that there shall remain nothing in their definitions so hard to be understood, that unlearned men may be in danger to wrest them to their own destruction, and no colour left for heretics to maintain their damnable heresies ; but that all doubts are so fully resolved, that laics may have free recourse to them, without the least danger ; otherwise this infallible guide will be liable to all the objections with which the Romanists charge the holy Scriptures, and consequently as dangerous and useless as they pretend the Scriptures are.

But that the same difficulties remain against the pretended infallibility, will evidently appear by examining the proceedings of some of the General Councils.

Pope Vigilius, and the second General Council at Constantinople, did for their contradictory opinions, both allege the General Council at Chalcedon.

In the sixth General Council at Constantinople, both the orthodox Fathers, and the Monothelites, owned the five former

General Councils, and the approved Fathers ; and equally claimed them to support their different doctrines. In the Council of Trent, though that Synod decreed, That the intention of the priest was necessary to confer a Sacrament, yet the Bishop of Minori writ that it was not ;* alleging, that the decree ought to be interpreted in his sense. Soto† and Vega, two great managers of the same Council, writ doctrines contrary to each other, and alleged the decree of that Synod for their authorities ; which inconsistencies might well happen, because Santa Croce,‡ one of the Pope's presidents, seeing he could not reconcile the opponents, framed the decrees so ambiguously, like the ancient heathen oracles, as to fit all different opinions.

By these proofs it plainly appears, that the interpretations of the General Councils, are as uncertain as the Scriptures, and consequently as dangerous at least, and useless ; which, it may be, was the cause why the last General Council at the Lateran, and this at Trent, forbade all persons, under great curses, to explain and comment on their decrees, except by authority from the Pope.

Though I intended to say no more of this matter, yet I must not omit answering some objections.

Bellarmino says,§ That the Council of Constance did not define absolutely, that General Councils have power from Christ over Popes ; but only in time of schism, when it is not known who is Pope ; for a doubtful Pope is accounted no Pope ; and so to have power over him is not to have power over Popes : that it was not then a General Council, there being only a third part of the Church, viz. those under the obedience of John, which could not define articles of faith, and that there was then no Pope, John being retired.

Nor indeed did Martin confirm that decree ; for he elegantly said, that he confirmed those decrees, which were synodically, that is, after the manner of other Councils, the matter being diligently examined, &c. One would think, by these objections, either that Bellarmine had never read the decrees of the Councils of Constance and Basil, or that he believed no one else had or would ; for the Council of Constance claimed their authority over Popes, immediately from Christ in matters of faith, and not in time of schism ; and they repeated that

* Soav. Polan. pag. 242. [Lond. 1640.] † [Ibid.] pag. 216.

‡ [Ibid.] pag. 215.

§ Lib. 2. de Conc. Author. cap. 19. [ut supra, p. 61. col. 1.]

decree, and made another, subjecting Popes who disobeyed that or any other General Council in matters of faith, to condign punishment, six days after that ; which surely was as mature deliberation as the Council of Trent used, when principal articles were defined by a number of five at the most ; nor was John deposed as a doubtful Pope, but as a criminal.

I make this answer only to manifest Bellarmine's disingenuity ; for I might have answered all his objections, by repeating briefly some of the proceedings at Basil, where Eugenius, an unquestionable Pope, after two years dispute with the Council concerning this matter, whercin they declare, that the question in debate* concerns the faith, &c. (which I hope, will be granted to be diligent and due examination) submitted, and confirmed the decrees of that Council, as I have shewed.

OF THE RULE OF FAITH.

THIS treatise hitherto pretendeth to overthrow the way of resolving faith into the infallibility of General Councils, by proving that they have erred. But because this does but shew what we are not to trust to, not what we ought to trust, I am unwilling this discourse should end without some debate concerning the true rule of faith, to shew what it is, in opposition to false pretenders.

It might have happened, that Fathers had not contradicted Fathers, nor Councils contradicted Councils, nor Churches contradicted Churches, nor that Church contradicted herself, which pretends to be the only guide in matters of faith. And even in this case we might have inquired, what is the true rule of faith, and concluded upon reasons proper to the thing, that these are not, because it is something else distinct from all these, which is that rule.

Now, as to this matter, I may say, that I have made the judgment of the Church of England my own judgment, since I have not only learned of her *what* to judge in it, but think myself also to have learned *why*. And when the authority

* Bin. tom. 4. pag. 111.

of a Church is the first inducement to consider what she teaches, and the reason of the thing itself the last cause of assenting to it, it is for the credit of the Church, no less than of the man, to believe as the Church believes.

I shall therefore first set down the judgment of the Church in this case, and then the reasons why I cannot but submit to it.

Our Church declares in her sixth Article, that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." And "in the name of the holy Scripture" she understands "those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church." So that the Church of England declares the holy Scriptures to be the rule of faith.

To which purpose also the close of the twentieth Article runs: "Although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same it ought not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of salvation." Which words suppose Holy Writ to be a perfect rule, inasmuch as nothing ought to be taken away from it, by decreeing any thing "against the same," nor any thing added to it, by enforcing any belief as necessary to salvation, which is "besides the same."

This is the rule which I at first received in submission to this Church, and being upon mature deliberation more and more confirmed, that she has dealt herein sincerely and faithfully, I do not only acknowledge it with all thankfulness, but think myself obliged in some degree, to represent to others some of the reasons of my persuasion.

I am well assured, that the profession of Christians, as such, cannot be made reasonable to the world, but by resolving their belief of the several doctrines, which they, as Christians, profess, into this reason, that God hath revealed them.

For whatever may be said, and that very justly, of the excellent usefulness of Christian faith, for promoting piety and virtue, and the congruity of its doctrines to the common notions of mankind; all this can be no more than an inducement to take them into farther consideration, and afterwards, an additional argument to confirm us in relying upon those other arguments, which are the proper foundation of faith,

viz. testimonies of Divine revelation. And therefore, if I am assured that the Bible is an authentic book, delivering Divine revelations, it must be a rule of my faith. And if no other authority can justly pretend to do the same, it must also be the only rule of my faith.

For the former I have this evidence, that the holy Scriptures have a more unquestionable tradition, than any other books in the world, that we know of, ever had ; since they have been conveyed down to us in such circumstances, as have made the tradition of them from the times in which they were written, to our days, one of the most notorious transactions that ever were in the world, I think I may safely say, the most notorious. So that if in any case I may be assured, that I read what an ancient author once wrote, I am beyond all doubt satisfied, that here I meet Apostles and Evangelists, though dead, yet speaking to me. And then what they say, I believe upon those testimonies here also recorded, which are an undoubted argument, that God revealed to them what they delivered to the world.

Finally, I cannot make the least question of the truth of what they have related as to these testimonies, because being matters of fact not done in a corner, but in the face of the world, the credibility of them could not be shaken by the powers of earth and hell, engaged to suppress that doctrine which was built upon them.

This and much more may be said to this purpose ; and thus far the Romanists are equally concerned with us, for the maintaining of common Christianity against infidels. And the Scriptures are granted to be a rule of faith on both sides.

But the question is, whether they are to be received as the only rule of faith. For there are, who say, that the Word of God delivered by Christ, and revealed to the Apostles, is partly contained in the holy Scriptures, and partly in unwritten traditions, of which the Church is the keeper, and, as occasion requires, the publisher in her General Councils from time to time ; but that these traditions were in the Church before such occasional publication of them, and stood upon as good evidence, that they were at first delivered by the Apostles, as those very articles of faith that were written by them.

Others say, that besides this, it appears from the Scriptures themselves, that we ought to submit to the testimony of the Church, declaring what is to be received with faith, and consequently to believe that she truly dispenses traditions received

from the Apostles, even where the particulars that she declares, are not to be proved by Scripture.

Now, if it be true, that the Apostles left some necessary points of faith, of which they said nothing in their writings, to be conveyed down some other way, from age to age, and if these have been conveyed down, with such evidence of the original from whence they came, as the Scriptures have; I think he that receives the Scriptures, and does not receive those unwritten traditions, must needs be either an ignorant or an obstinate man. Or if the Scriptures which we do receive, sufficiently acquaint us, that there was to be a standing authority in the Church, easy to be known by everybody, to whose declarations all were to submit with the obedience of faith, even in things not declared in the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists, this also would argue either incapacity, or wilfulness in those that refuse to acknowledge another rule of faith besides the Scriptures. We are therefore now to consider, what reason there is for these suppositions, which would bring in unwritten traditions to be a partner with the written Word in the ruling of our faith. And because our obligation to receive such a supplemental rule, must arise either from the evidence of tradition, which is a thing credible in itself, or from the testimony of the Scriptures themselves, which we have already received as a rule of faith: I shall speak distinctly to both these pretences: and,

First, of the evidence of tradition, which is a thing credible in itself. But before I enter upon this argument, I think fit to premise two things.

I deny not that the Apostles taught the Christians of those days, several things which we do not find in their writings, and which are now lost for want of being committed to writing. For it is plain from the Scripture itself, that all is not written which they taught. Saint Paul told the Thessalonians,* that they knew what withheld the revealing of the Man of Sin: therefore himself, or some other inspired person, had made this revelation known to them, and it is likely to other Churches too. But it is not written what that obstacle was in particular. And who can now say what it is, with that assurance which he might have expressed, if that had been written too? It were a vain thing to imagine this to be the only instance of instructions that were not written, and which, for not having been written, have had no certain tradition.

* 2 Thess. ii. 6.

But yet I acknowledge, that the interpretations of the Fathers may very often give light, and lead us to a probable sense of the more obscure intimations of some texts of Scripture. Thus from the writings of some of the Fathers, it seems probable, that the tradition which went amongst the ancient Christians concerning that which withheld the revelation of the Man of Sin, was this: that the strength and greatness of the Roman Empire hindered his coming; and the dissolution of that empire into many kingdoms and sovereignties, was to be the door at which he would enter, and shew himself to the world.

Neither do I deny, that the general practice of the Church immediately after the days of the Apostles, is the best interpreter of many texts of Scripture, especially of those which speak of the government and discipline of the Church, many of which are not so clear and full, but that in order to a true understanding of them, it will be necessary to inquire what was that ancient practice of the catholic Church in these matters, which stands upon good tradition.

But I deny, with our Church, that there is any doctrine to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation, which is not read in holy Scripture, nor may be proved thereby. And in the first place, I deny that any such doctrines have evidence of tradition; which I have already acknowledged to be a thing credible in itself.

For if they had this ground, it would be as notorious, that these points of faith, which the Evangelists and the Apostles did not think fit to mention in their writings: it would I say, be as notorious, that they were handed down by the catholic Church from the Apostles throughout all ages to this, as it is, that the holy Scriptures have been thus conveyed, and are now with this advantage delivered to us. For that which has made the tradition of the Scriptures so highly credible, above that of other books, of which there is yet no doubt, is this, that the vastness of the concern soon drew in people of all nations and languages to consider them, insomuch that they have all along engaged mankind, and found more business for the world, and have been more read, oftener transcribed and translated, than any other books ever were, or in all likelihood ever will be. So that as our twentieth Article says, the Church is the keeper and the witness of Holy Writ, for indeed she hath

kept the Scriptures, which we can run up from age to age, till we come to the Apostles, and this with very little and inconsiderable exception, through the vast body of the catholic Church.

But now, if there were points of saving faith, not written by the Evangelists or the Apostles, but committed to the report of the Church ; these were of no less importance than the Scriptures themselves, and had, for some time at least, been guarded and inculcated everywhere, as being no less necessary for salvation, than anything that was written.

Nay, I cannot but add, that there had been a universally greater care to support the profession of these, than of the written articles : inasmuch as the common sense of mankind agrees to this, that records are a more certain means of conveying truth to posterity, than report. And men would be more apt to believe, that the Apostles said what themselves wrote, than that they said what they did not write, but which others reported from their mouths. And therefore, by how much more the tradition of written doctrines was in danger to lose its credit, than the tradition of unwritten doctrines ; so much more care had been taken to make the tradition of the former as loud as thunder. We should have met with them in every page, as I may say, of the Fathers next after the Apostles, and the like in those that succeeded them. Nay, when it was observed, after the decease of all the Apostles, that some points necessary to salvation had not been touched in their writings, it could hardly have been otherwise, but that the guides of the Church should on purpose have written books to secure the conveyance of them to posterity, and have declared to the world as unanimously and formally as was possible ; that whereas the writings of the inspired preachers and publishers of their religion, which gave sufficient authority to some articles of the Christian faith, *viz.* to those that are written, have not yet expressed others that are of equal necessity to be believed, since they were but orally delivered as such, by the Apostles to the Church ; it is hereby made known to all ages to come, that these and these are doctrines of this sort, that posterity may have no reason to doubt what they are. This indeed, or something like this, had been a likely foundation of leaving unwritten articles to the evidence of tradition. At least, considering the danger of losing them in process of time, because they wanted the authority of the inspired writings ; Christian people were to be the more

carefully instructed in them, and they should have been taught to profess them everywhere, in their solemn assemblies for the service of God. Which course, if it had been taken, we should have had these articles conveyed down to us in the ancient creeds and formularies, which indeed, had given them a reverend authority; which method has been carefully observed, as to those articles which are of later date, and have been introduced by the Church of Rome. Witness that profession of faith published by Pius IV. in pursuance of the decrees of the Council of Trent; where to the Nicene Creed, amongst other novelties, the profession of these is added:—

“ I profess, that a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead, is offered to God in the mass; and that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, there is really and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that there is a conversion made of the whole substance of bread into his body, and of the whole substance of wine into his blood; which conversion the Catholic Church calls transubstantiation. I acknowledge also, that whole and entire Christ, and the true sacrament is received under one kind only. I firmly hold that there is a purgatory, and that the souls detained there are helped by the prayers of the faithful, and likewise that the saints reigning with Christ are to be venerated and called upon, &c.”

These and the rest of the most notorious innovations in faith, established by that Council, were thought fit to be inserted into the Creed, for their better security. And since it was resolved, that these things should for the future go for a part of that faith, without which we must not hope to be saved, it was discreetly done to take this care of them, that at last they should be found in a Creed. Only we say, this care comes too late to satisfy us, that the Apostles delivered these points to the Church. For since we cannot find them in the Scriptures, we have reason to think, that a more early care of this kind had been taken, if they had indeed come from the Apostles by unwritten tradition. And we confess, they had then been delivered to us with great authority, though we had wanted them in the Scriptures. But that there should be unwritten traditions of such vast consequence, and neither the Creed of the Greek, nor of the Latin Church, make the least mention of them; that the principal written traditions, which in comparison needed it not, should be put together into a Creed; but that the unwritten ones which needed it very

much, should be quite left out, and never thought of to that purpose, till about fifteen hundred years after ; that the people should be no better instructed, and that the guides of the people, the fathers of the Church should be so careless as to lay no stress upon these things in their writings ! This is a wonder above all wonders ; or rather, it is very strange, that men should now-a-days pretend the evidence of tradition for certain points of faith not written by the Evangelists, or any of the Apostles, or any inspired preachers of the Gospel, where there is not the least appearance of evidence for it.

But when I consider farther, for what doctrine's sake it is, that the evidence of tradition is pretended, *viz.* for the sake of those doctrines which make the latter half of the new Trent Creed, I am, I confess, something amazed, to see how cross the understandings of some men lie, or rather, what power interest has, to make them affirm things, not only without evidence, but against it. For we find not only no mention of these pretended points of faith, not only a deep silence concerning them through those ages of the Church, wherein, if in any, we might expect the greatest sincerity, that is, for three hundred and fifty years after Christ, but very many things palpably inconsistent with them. Which being considered, the softest thing I can say is, that it is a desire these points should be believed, rather than any good reason for it, which inclines any man to think that there is another rule of faith besides the Scriptures, which stands upon evidence of tradition as well as the Scriptures. And what reason I have thus to conclude, will perhaps yet more plainly appear, if we consider these following things.

1. If it were a doubtful point, whether the new articles of the Trent Creed were to be found in the writings of the Fathers or not, this, I think, were enough to overthrow the pretence to such an evidence of tradition in their behalf, as so weighty a matter requires. I know what vast pains have been taken to find these traditionary doctrines in the Fathers, what volumes have been written for this end, and with what confidence all the Fathers have been said to be on that side. But it is not by what confident men say, but by what reasonable men judge, that the victory in this cause will go at last. When once a Church has got into vast temporal power and greatness, and her favours are to go to none but those that merit them, by serving her cause against all other Churches in the world, when her servants are both great and many, they can say those things without blushing, which a man,

destitute of such supports and advantages, would never be bold enough to say, if he were not also destitute of modesty or discretion. It is no hard matter to meet in the several volumes of the Fathers, with such passages as may be wrested to a sense which they never dreamed of, and applied to the service of a cause, which in several nations has drawn together so many men as are able to keep one another in countenance. If a Father does but bestow a compliment upon the Bishop of Rome, or upon the Church of Rome, this shall be enough to make him the bishop of all bishops, and her the mistress of all Churches. And let there be never so many passages on the other side, plainly asserting the independence of other bishops upon him, and the independence of other Churches upon her, a controversy may be for some time supported on the weak side by convenient wit and boldness. If the Fathers sometimes speak very magnificently of the holy mystery of the Eucharist, with respect to the Son of God, whose sacrifice for us is there represented and commemorated; the Fathers are presently brought in for saying nothing less, than that the substance of bread and wine is changed into the substance of Christ's body and blood; and that he is as properly offered in sacrifice to God in every mass, as when he offered up himself upon the cross for us. But as to these and the other controverted articles, we profess that we cannot so much as find any footsteps of them in the primitive Fathers; but, as I said before, we meet with many things that are irreconcilably repugnant to them: which makes it necessary for us to conclude, that there is no evidence of tradition, that the Fathers received these unwritten articles of faith from the Apostles, which we are anathematized for not receiving from the late Council of Trent. If there were evidence of tradition for the supremacy of the Pope, how is it possible such a book should be written to shew the contrary, as Dr. Barrow's? If there were evidence of tradition for the doctrine of transubstantiation, how could the late discourses against it have shewn that the Fathers knew nothing of it? If there were evidence of tradition for the worship of the blessed Virgin and the saints, certainly the late discourse against that, in "Answer to Monsieur de Meaux's Appeal to the fourth Age," has abused the ancient Fathers, and most grossly misrepresented them; and yet if any man examines the matter, he will go near to find it otherwise. I might mention later discourses of the same kind upon other subjects, which at least carry a notable appearance of truth,

and for which our adversaries are in arrears to us. Now if there were evidence of tradition for their side of the questions, it were the easiest thing in the world to expose these books to public shame; because if they do not effectually shew the contrary, they are upon the matter made up of gross deceits. For all wise men know that evidence of tradition is a notorious thing: so notorious, that whoever insists upon the pretence to it for that which has it not, must needs be led away with strange prejudice: but he that denies it to that which has, will hardly escape being notorious himself, for want of honesty, or for want of wit. And therefore, if evidence of tradition were against us in these points, our divines could not pretend to argue against them out of the Fathers so as they do, without notorious falsifying the testimonies of the Fathers; which, if they were so void of all modesty as to do, yet at least, I can hardly imagine our adversaries so void of common discretion as to suffer them to do it, without making it appear from one end of a discourse of this kind to the other that indeed they do so. Perhaps the force of what I say, will be better apprehended by those who are in this cause, either with us or against us, if we lay it in another case. Suppose any man should be so hardy as to maintain, that the Scriptures of the New Testament were written not above thirteen hundred years since, or at least that they were of little or no authority in the Church for the first three hundred and fifty years after Christ: I would fain know what he would get by it, but to be accounted a very mad, as well as a very wicked person, for the sake of such an attempt: but surely he could not shake the assurance that an understanding and prudent person has of the contrary. Now the plain reason is this, because it is as evident through all the writings of those Fathers, that they all received the Scriptures as derived from the Apostles themselves, as any matter of fact before our times can be. But I say, if these unwritten points, which we are anathematized for not receiving, stood upon evidence of tradition too, we had found the Fathers delivering them as unquestionably, as we find them delivering the authority of the Scriptures; and in all probability, with something greater care and solicitude too, and that because they wanted the authority of the Scriptures. And then it were as ridiculous an attempt to go about to overthrow the tradition of the one as of the other, and nothing could be more easy than to shew it. For when there is evidence of tradition for a thing, it cannot bear any

colour for a dispute, that there is no such evidence. Men may wrangle for some time, and pretend tradition for that which has it not, but no wrangling will serve the turn to keep any cause in countenance that stands upon the denial of evident tradition.

2. The next thing I consider, with reference to the Romanists pretending tradition for their unwritten articles, is, that they reject some points which have incomparably a better colour for a pretence to tradition, than those for which they pretend it. I shall instance only in the millenary doctrine, which some of the Fathers do not only positively assert, but one of them* makes it the belief of the orthodox Christians, and joins it with the belief of the resurrection. Now if the like could be found in behalf of any of the new articles of the late creed, I do not well know how we could have been able to bear up against the confidence of our adversaries, who, without any such testimonies as the millenary doctrine hath, are ever and anon crying out against us, that we go against all the Fathers. And yet themselves can see no evidence of tradition for this doctrine, but wholly reject it; in which we cannot but commend them, because even that testimony, which this doctrine hath from the Fathers, will not amount to an argument that the Apostles delivered it, as the Fathers did. But then much less ought those doctrines to be obtruded under this pretence, for which there is by no means such colour of tradition as there is for this. And therefore, it may well amaze a man that expects nothing but equal dealing from all Churches, that those Christians who reject the one, shall require us to receive the other; and that they should pretend another rule of faith besides the Scriptures, which stands upon the evidence of tradition, when they make that doctrine to be heretical, which bids for it with an hundred times more probability than any one of those which they would establish upon it. But then,

3. It is clear beyond all reasonable doubt, that no tradition for unwritten points of faith, can be made out through the writings of the primitive Fathers; since they all acknowledge the Scriptures to be the rule of faith. And though sometimes they do appeal to universal tradition, and the agreement of the Apostolical Churches, yet thus they appealed always in behalf of those doctrines, which were clearly founded upon Scripture, not of unwritten points. They used divers arguments to confound the monstrous heretics that started up in the beginning

* Just. Mar. Dial. cum Tryph. p. 307. Par. [p. 178. Par. 1742.]

of the Church ; and since some of these heretics pretended a secret tradition from the Apostles, it was one very proper way of silencing them, to oppose a notorious tradition, in which all the Apostolical Churches agreed, to their secret one. And because the holy Scriptures themselves stand upon tradition, therefore the several points of faith which they contain stand upon it too, and may at any time be enforced by it. So that when we meet with an appeal to tradition, in Irenæus and Tertullian, it were a great mistake to imagine that they supposed another rule of faith besides the Scriptures, since the tradition which they so justly pretended was for the doctrines of the Scripture : and it is likewise very plain, that they added no other rule to the Scriptures, nor thought there was anything necessary to be believed in order to salvation, which is not therein contained. Which is a manifest argument, that unless the Fathers were but novices, a tradition of unwritten doctrines cannot be made out from the Fathers. For what could be more absurd, than that they should at once agree in the making the Scriptures the only rule of faith, and all the while agree in delivering points necessary to salvation which are not in the Scripture ? Here therefore I had been obliged to shew some part of that "cloud of witnesses," wherewith we are encompassed, in maintaining that the Fathers took the holy Scriptures for the rule of their faith ; but that this point is made out so learnedly and so plainly in the late "Vindication of the Answer to some late Papers," from page 40 to page 50, that I will make bold to say, it is done for ever, as they will find one after another, who will try to undo it again, if we have any reason to hope that they will so much as try it. And this will be enough to satisfy all reasonable persons, that it must be impossible to make out a tradition of unwritten points of faith by the Fathers, that they made the holy writings of the Bible "the rule of their faith."

Seeing, therefore, there is no evidence of the least care in the primitive Church to preserve unwritten points of faith ; seeing no such thing appears in the ancient Creeds, or in the books of the Fathers ; seeing this had been as necessary as the loud and constant tradition of the Scriptures, if any such unwritten points there had been ; and since, notwithstanding, there is not the least appearance of so notorious a tradition of such points ; seeing also the doctrines for which such tradition is pretended, have no footsteps in the writings of the Church for the first ages, and that many of them are directly repugnant to what the truly primitive Fathers taught ; seeing that

if it were but a doubtful and disputable point, whether the Fathers witnessed to such doctrines or not, they would still want the evidence of tradition : since they who pretend tradition for these doctrines, reject other points, which there is some colour to pretend tradition for, incomparably more than for those which they would obtrude upon us. Lastly, seeing that the Fathers, though whom the tradition of such doctrines must necessarily be derived to us, did unanimously take the holy Scriptures for the rule of their faith ; and that they had notoriously contradicted themselves, if at the same time they had successively delivered points of faith which are not in the Scriptures. All these things, I say, being taken together, do amount to little less than a perfect demonstration, that there is no supplemental rule of faith to be added to the Scriptures, which can be shewn to stand upon evidence of tradition : which was the first thing to be shewn. But,

Secondly, If it be said that our obligation to receive another rule of faith, which must be added to that of the Scriptures, does arise from “the testimony of the Scriptures themselves,” which we have already, upon good reason, received as “a rule of faith,” I desire these following things may be considered.

1. That this pretence does make the Scriptures to be the supreme rule of faith : since, if the Church, whether the Catholic, or some particular Church, whether one man or more in it, do claim to be believed in unwritten doctrines upon the account of his or their declaration of them, the reason hereof is at last resolved this way into the authority of the Scriptures. Therefore,

2. If evidence of Scripture be pretended for such Church authority ; for instance, that the Church in communion with St. Peter's chair, is to be believed by all, in all that she teaches ; then, before we can be rationally led into this belief concerning that Church, we must first be supposed to believe the divine authority of the Scriptures, and either allowed to understand some part of the Scriptures, or at least enabled to understand them by such discourses as one man may assist another with, without pretending authority from God to oblige him to receive his interpretation, because it is his. If therefore the Romanists will keep closely and distinctly to this argument from Scripture, for another rule of faith beside the Scripture, we desire not fairer adversaries. But if, whilst we argue with them, and they with us, from authority of Scripture, they press us to receive such interpretations, as they cannot oblige us to receive otherwise than upon an authority that is yet to be

proved; nothing can be more absurd and senseless, since this is to prove the thing in question, by supposing it to be out of question.

Wherefore as to these texts following: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church."* And, "Tell it unto the Church."† And, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."‡ And, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth."§ And, "Feed my sheep:"|| which are the common places upon which they would establish an ecclesiastical authority, which, being infallible, is to be believed in all things, and fix that authority in the Church of Rome. The meaning of these texts, I say, is to be disputed upon principles common to them and to us, whereof the infallibility of their Church is none, because it yet remains to be proved by these authorities. But then,

3. We need not a more convincing proof, that there is no testimony of Scripture to be produced with any colour, to make the definitions of that Church a rule of faith, when they can produce no better than these, which neither in words express any such thing, nor by any reasonable consequence imply it. Because Christ said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock," &c. therefore Peter was that rock, and not the faith which he confessed. Therefore Peter was that only rock, exclusively to all the other Apostles. Therefore Peter was not that only rock, exclusively to all, or to any of his successors, but one rock was to be piled upon another to the end of the world, for the Church to be built upon. And when our Lord said, "Thou art Peter," he said it in effect to Pope Hildebrand, and to John XXII., as well as to the Apostle. And yet these are not half the presumptions upon this place, that must be swallowed before we come to the conclusion, that the Roman Church is to be believed in all her definitions of faith. Because also, Christ made such and such promises to all the Apostles, therefore every one of them were made to their successors to the world's end; and because he made certain promises to them upon conditions, therefore they were meant to their successors, whether they performed the conditions or no. But why should I so much as intimate the miserable inconsequence of their reasoning from Scripture, which has been so often, and so unanswerably shewn already? For instance, there is no place of Scripture more dear to them, than "Thou art Peter,"

* Matth. xvi. 18.

† Chap. xviii. 17.

‡ Chap. xxviii. 20.

§ John xiv. 16, 17.

|| Chap. xxi.

for bringing down supremacy and infallibility to the Roman Church. Now let any man take the two sermons preached last St. Peter's day upon these words, one by Dr. Godden, in favour of the Roman Church, the other by a reverend divine of our Church, and compare them together; let a Papist do it, and I am reasonably assured, that if he be not perfectly convinced, he will yet, at least, be somewhat ashamed.

Besides all this, the Fathers never understood these texts in that sense, which the present Church of Rome takes them in; of which this, without producing their interpretations, is an unanswerable proof, that they set up no visible infallible judge of controversies in the Church, that they made the Scriptures the rule of faith, and knew nothing of an authority that could oblige the Church to take other points of faith, which are not to be found in the Scriptures.

We have been told there ~~must~~ be an infallible Church, and an ecclesiastical authority obliging all to submit with the obedience of faith, because it is so convenient that thus it should be. I would ask these wise men, whether it had not been as convenient every whit, that the Scriptures should have said in plain terms, God will in every age provide an infallible guide of controversies? Had it not yet been more convenient to have said, this infallible guide shall be found no where but in the communion of St. Peter's chair? And yet more, that St. Peter's chair should be fixed at Rome? And more convenient still, that either the Pope himself, or a Council by him confirmed, should be that infallible guide? And most of all, that it should have been added too, that the whole flock of Christ should be for ever bound to submit to the definitions of that guide in controversies, how contrary soever his definitions might seem to be to the doctrines that were taught by the Apostles, and contained in their writings? If God had meant all that authority to the Roman Church, which it claims, and that this authority should be evident from the Scriptures: no man, I think, will deny, that some such declarations as I have expressed, had been very convenient. And it seems to us, that it had not been only convenient, but very necessary, that a point of so vast consequence, should have been as clearly expressed as any truth in the Bible.

But we leave it to our adversaries to argue in that manner, as if God must have done every thing, which to them it seems convenient that he should have done. It sufficeth us, that God hath not obliged us to believe that authority upon the testimony of Scripture, for which we cannot find the least

evidence of Scripture, though it is a matter of that moment, if it had been true, that it required the greatest evidence of all. And though we do not believe the Fathers to have been infallible interpreters of the Scripture, yet we are reasonably certain, that this same visible infallible judge, is so far from being plainly visible in the Scriptures, that he is not to be found there at all, because the Fathers could find him there no more than we.

To pretend that we do not see the truth, because we are blinded with prejudice or interest, is to give us occasion to say, that the strength of prejudice and interest will be presumed to lie on that side where the arguments are weakest. For our own parts, we cannot but appeal to God for the sincerity of our intentions, and to the world for the solidity of our reasonings.

And as for those texts which are produced in favour of another rule of faith besides the Scripture, *viz.* a Church authority, that in all things of this kind is to conclude our judgment; we may also appeal to our adversaries themselves, whether they put any great confidence in them; since it is so notorious that they are wont to argue from these places of Scripture at last, as interpreted by the Church: which, besides the shamefulness of proving a thing by itself, is a very shrewd argument that themselves do not think these places are plain for their purpose, inasmuch as they need an infallible authority to satisfy us that they are so. For I cannot persuade myself to the contrary, but that if a proposition be reasonably plain, I need no infallible judge to satisfy me about the meaning of it.

Thus I have shewn the holy Scripture to be the only rule of faith, inasmuch as it has no partner that can justly pretend either evidence of tradition, or testimony of Scripture.

As for that objection which our adversaries commonly make against all discourses of this kind, that a rule without a judge can never end controversies, but will rather increase them; that while every man judges for himself of the sense of the Scripture, infinite errors and discords will follow; that if for the avoiding of this mischief, there be an authority set up in the Church to interpret the letter of the Scripture, then the interpretation of the judge is of necessity a rule, as well as the Scripture; but if there be no such authority, all things must run into confusion and disorder: I say, all this has been sufficiently answered over and over; and therefore I shall say the less to it here. Now,

Although it be not only every man's right, but duty also, to

inquire into the truth, and it be impossible but that he must judge for himself at last, yet this does by no means void the authority of spiritual guides and governors, to lead the people committed to their charge into the knowledge of the truth. For instance, as in a matter of so great concern as the true interpretation of Scripture, I am bound to use my own judgment as well as I can ; so, for the same reason, I am bound to use all the helps I can procure, but especially to hearken to the governors of that Church whereof I am a member ; which I may certainly do without being obliged to follow them right or wrong, unless a man must of necessity put out his own eyes, because he hopes that he has a good guide. That all confusion must needs follow the liberty of private inquiry and judgment, is a thing that no declamations will ever persuade me to believe, when I know the contrary by my own experience. I was baptized and educated in this Church of England, to the profession of Christianity ; the Church laid before me, as it does before all, her doctrine and worship, and has given me means and liberty to examine all by the Scriptures, and by common principles of religion. I have done this as well as I can, and am mightily confirmed in that faith and profession, which I took up first upon her authority. Now I will not presume to say, that the Church is obliged to me for taking this pains ; but I must confess, that I am not a little obliged to the Church for two things, both for instructing me in the sincere truth of religion, and for allowing me the liberty and the means to satisfy myself that she has done so ; for whether she had taught me a doctrine that would bear examination, it had been impossible for me to know, if I had not examined it. And I am so sure, that I am not the less, but the more fast in the communion of this Church, and in submission to her authority, for having used this liberty, that a man may harangue all day long about the mischiefs of this liberty, and when he has done, I shall need to do no more, but to oppose my own experience to his flourishes ; and it shall remain true, that a Church which teaches the truth sincerely, can do herself no greater right, than to afford all manner of means and opportunities to her members to examine what she teaches. This indeed, as well as other good things, may be abused ; but they that do abuse it, shall have the worst on it ; but the Church is clear of all blame : and what our Lord said of wisdom, will be true of the Church, that she shall be “ justified of her children.” I do not deny that this liberty is very

much for the disadvantage of a Church in one case, *i. e.* if she teaches errors instead of truths, and for “doctrines the commandments of men;” for when this comes once to be fully discovered; the discovery makes such a wound in her, as cannot be healed without a reformation, but otherwise she shall linger of it till she dies. And therefore this liberty of private judgment, and inquiring into the truth by the Scriptures, lays a mighty obligation upon all Churches to be honest, I mean upon their spiritual guides; especially since whether they give this liberty or not, it will be taken more or less; not all the terrors of the world, nor fraud joined to force can totally suppress it. And when it has once got abroad, the more art and violence is used to confine it again, it will break out at length the more irresistibly, and bear down all before it. Truth has a natural power over the wise and the honest, and this is a holding interest, and will be a good one a thousand years hence, if the world last so long. But error, although it may be popular for some time, and for no little time too, is yet really losing ground when it seems to gain it, because it is still spending upon a stock that will not always last, upon artifice and worldly power, upon violence and all deceivableness of unrighteousness, which at last will make it odious to all that part of the world that has been imposed upon. And when once to the native beauty and power of faith, there is added a full view of all those ways by which error has laboured to suppress it; error will be found to have undone itself, and all the world will be more perfectly enlightened by those very methods which have been used to keep it in darkness and ignorance. But that Church which is built upon the truth, is built upon a rock; and he that feels himself upon so firm a foundation, will not lightly be removed from his own steadfastness. But how is it possible for him to know that he is so established, without the liberty of private judgment, I would gladly know, from any man that pretends the contrary; and how the liberty of private judgment can be allowed, where the free use of the holy Scriptures is denied, I would also know; and desire only, that he who would make me understand and believe what he has to say upon this matter, would be very sure beforehand, that he understands and believes it himself.

In the mean time, who can help it, if this liberty also be abused, to the supporting of faction and error by some or other; who, I say, can help it, but those that are guilty, and those, who for ends best known to themselves, do underhand

feed those mistakes and passions of others, which create disturbances amongst us? But they who for this reason would have the laity absolutely to depend upon the clergy, talk as if a Church were instituted to send men to heaven, as a shepherd drives his flocks to pasture, without the use of any reason or understanding of their own. Was so excellent a religion as that of our Lord Jesus revealed from heaven, was it contrived by the divine wisdom and goodness, into so heavenly a good design, and established upon such sure proofs and testimony of divine revelation? Are all these things contained in the Scriptures? And has God given us reason to apprehend them in such measure, as that we cannot but thereupon admire and adore his infinitely wise and good Providence? And yet must we be restrained from daring so much as to look into the proper grounds of this faith, as if either it had no reasons, or we no understanding? If that be true which the Bishop of St. Mark supposed in one of the convocations at the Council of Trent, any religion, I think, might have served a layman's turn as well as Christianity. The canons,* said he, "determine, that laics have no authority to command, but necessarily to obey; and that the Council ought to decree, that seculars ought humbly to obey that doctrine of faith which is given them by the Church, without disputing or thinking further of it." It seems then, that the layman's whole duty is, that of absolute obedience to the priest, and he has no more to do but to receive the doctrine of faith given him by the Church, "without thinking further of it." But at this rate, the layman ought to know no difference between the Christian and the Mahometan Creed, if the Church should think fit to change the one for the other. For I cannot understand why the Mahometan Creed should not do a layman's business as well as the Apostles' Creed, if he is to receive his faith from the priest, "without disputing or thinking further on it." It is true, there is a great deal of difference between the two Creeds; the one is altogether true, and half of the other is false; but it is not my business, who am but a layman, to inquire into the reasons that make the difference, for I am to know but one reason of my faith, *viz.* that it is given me by the Church; and this reason will undoubtedly serve for this creed, or for that creed, or for any creed whatsoever. It has served for the bringing in as many more articles into the Creed as were

* History of the Council of Trent, [ut supra,] p. 141.

there before ; and it may serve as well to turn out all the old ones, as it has served to bring in the new. For we are "humbly to obey that doctrine of faith which is given us by the Church, without disputing or thinking farther of it."

To a Church that has cause for this proceeding, I know no mischief that can be more undoing, than the liberty of private judgment : but to a Church that has no cause to fear the use of this liberty, nothing can be more for her advantage, than that all persons be not only permitted, but persuaded to examine the terms of her communion with all possible freedom and diligence, according to their abilities ; and to give them all manner of assistance towards it, as the clergy of this Church have done, to their immortal credit, by their sermons and their writings, which are so instructing, that all indifferent persons may observe they would not envy the laity, if they were wiser than their teachers.

As for that objection against our Church, which is of late so much insisted upon by some, that notwithstanding the liberty she gives to private Christians to examine her doctrines by the Scriptures, she yet peremptorily requires the profession of that faith which she teaches, and conformity to her rules of worship : there is nothing in it to surprise any man, but the intolerable vanity of the objections. For this is so far from being unreasonable, that for the same reason that she does the one, she may and ought to do the other ; that is, because she is certain that the conditions of her communion are justifiable to the whole world, therefore, she should neither fear to insist upon them, nor to provoke all persons to the examination of them by any proper methods whatsoever.

This objection, however, runs a little cross to the other, that the liberty our Church gives, must needs cause disorder and confusion. For why there must needs be disorder where a Church's faith is fixed, and a form of worship established, and conformity required, and no just cause of offence given, I cannot understand, unless it be because it must needs be, that some men will be very unreasonable, and others will be very wicked, after the best care is taken to direct them in their duty, and oblige them to it. If they of the Roman Church can tell how to prevent this infallibly, it is a secret which they have as yet kept to themselves. For our own parts, we are altogether ignorant of any way that shall make it impossible for men that are endued with free will, to abuse it, whether by making wrong judgment, or a wrong choice.

Our Church hath fixed terms of communion, which are truly catholic, and leaves every one to judge for himself, whether they be so or not, affording to every one the liberty of using all means that they can, in order to the making a right judgment, and, therefore, of using the Scriptures, which are not only the best in themselves, but which also come within the compass of the abilities and leisure of all, more or less. We are to use the liberty of judging for ourselves by these means, under this consideration, that we are to be accountable for it at the day of judgment. If the losing of this Church's communion were all the penalty we are in danger of, by refusing her terms, this were but a small obligation to consider well, whether there was just cause to refuse them or not. But when the penalty of making a wrong judgment against the Church, will be no less than condemnation at the last day, we think reasonable men cannot lie under a greater obligation to look to it, that they proceed in their search after truth with all care and sincerity. This is the provision that God hath made for the maintaining of truth and peace in his Church; that governors cannot abuse their authority in commanding, nor the people their liberty of judging whether the command can be obeyed with a good conscience, but at the peril of their souls. Notwithstanding which provision, there are schisms in the Church; which we cannot much wonder at, because God hath not thought fit to provide against it by means that would infallibly secure peace and truth, any more than to secure the piety and virtue of every believer by irresistible causes. As for those that impute the disorders and schisms of the Church to the liberty of judging by the Scriptures, which we allow; I would be glad to know what means they are provided with, to ascertain the unity of communion. They tell us often, and we are even nauseated with the repetition of so frivolous a pretence, that God has left an infallible judge of controversies amongst them, to whom we ought to submit. But notwithstanding this pretended provision, is it not apparent that there are flagrant controversies in the Christian world, and opposite communions of Churches one against the other? Do we see the effects of such a provision in the Church? Or rather, is it not evident that God hath not provided a means of ending controversies, or rather, of preventing them, that would infallibly prevail, because controversies are not prevented, nor ended, but have for many ages been kept up in the Church to the scandal of the world? But then we are told they would

be ended, if all men would submit to the infallible judge. Which is as much as to say, that an infallible judge is not an infallible means of ending controversies, because men may choose whether they will submit to him or not. So that this very pretence supposes, that God hath not left an absolute, but only a conditional provision against schisms; that is to say, if all men would do their duty, as they ought and might; which is the very case as I left it before. But if there be no infallible judge, it cannot be our duty to submit to one that pretends to be so; no, although if all men would agree to submit to him, controversies would be ended every where. For if nothing else were to be regarded but agreement, I could propound other expedients, besides that of submission to an infallible judge, which though they be not very wise, would do the business as well. For instance, if all Churches would agree to cast lots for their causes, and to rest in the winner; that would be one expedient, as effectual as a general agreement to submit to the Pope, or whosoever else must go to make up an infallible judge. But if we must not submit to such a pretended judge, till we have a reason to believe him to be what he pretends; then, as Mr. Chillingworth hath told them, here will be, as there is, no small controversy, whether he be such a judge or not. And if, in conclusion, it is no controversy with me that he is but a pretender, I may, perhaps, as safely refer myself to the next man I meet in the streets, as to him. For it is never for any good that infallibility is pretended where it is not.

Upon the whole matter, I can neither see that the free use of the Scriptures must needs cause schisms, nor that the setting up of an infallible judge must needs prevent them. But I am abundantly convinced, that God has left us no infallible judge to determine for us, and that he has left us the holy Scriptures to be the rule of our faith. I make not the least doubt that God, for infinitely wise and good reasons, has given us these means of coming to the knowledge of the truth, and not the other. I plainly discern this to be one, that the means of instruction, and the evidence of truth which God has afforded us, might be a touchstone to distinguish between the sincere and the teachable, between the good and the honest heart on the one side, and the insincere and dishonest on the other.* And sure I am, that God has appointed a day of

* John viii. 42. to 48.

judgment, in which he will proceed according to that difference, and distinguish between these two, by rewarding the one, and punishing the other.

It is the honour and the duty of spiritual pastors and guides, to instruct us in the true faith, and to conduct us in the true worship of God, to administer the sacraments to us according to the Gospel; but they may abuse their authority, and corrupt the word of God, as many have done. And though they may be too many and too great to be controlled by ecclesiastical discipline, yet God will require it at their hands, and bring them to a severe account for abusing their trust.

It is the prerogative and duty of Christian governors, to make laws for the edifying and well-governing of the Church; which power, if they shall abuse, God will require a severe account of them too, though they are not accountable to man.

It is the privilege and the duty of private Christians to search the Scriptures, to take heed to the Word of God, that they may be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of their hope. But if any man through pride, lust, envy, or any other respect abuse this liberty, to the dishonour of God, and the disturbance of the public peace; he is liable not only to the censure of the Church, and the penalties of secular laws, but likewise to the high displeasure of Almighty God; and though he should prove so prosperous a criminal, as to escape justice here, yet the all-seeing eye of God will assuredly find him out, and punish him hereafter.

So that the Gospel, and the means we have to come to the knowledge of the true faith, and of what God requires, is a touchstone for all degrees of men in the Church; inasmuch as they are all left to do their several duties, according to their several trusts that God hath committed to them, with that assistance which is sufficient for honest men, but neither with that evidence nor that grace which cannot possibly be resisted.

Finally, it is the happiness of private Christians, that the government of Church or State being no part of their business, they are to judge for themselves only; which since it is their proper work, and since the danger of abusing their liberty is so great, their care and endeavour rightly to use it ought to be as great. Religion is my greatest concern, and I am to apply my understanding to it with all attention and diligence. For my instruction by the Scriptures, I am to use such helps as a prudent man would use for the interpretation of any other

book, in which he desires to be skilful. But because my eternal state depends upon my learning that faith, of which the holy Scriptures are the rule; I am obliged to be more solicitous and careful in the reading of them, than all other books in the world. As I dare not pervert those places of Scripture which are plain, so I am to be afraid lest I pervert those that are difficult; and in so great a concern I am not to rest wholly upon self, but for the resolution of my doubts to use better judgments, especially of the pastors of the Church. In judging for myself, with respect to what is required of me, as I am a member of this Church, I am to remember that God will judge me for pretending Scripture against the just and lawful commands of my superiors. I am therefore to apply myself to the study of the Scriptures, under the power of this resolution, to obey God in the first place, and then to obey the laws of Church and State.

If power and authority be not exercised in pursuance of those ends for which it was ordained, but for the advancing of error and impiety; I know that we must patiently submit to the wise providence of Almighty God, who many times permits this, either for our chastisement or our trial, but never will utterly forsake us, till we forsake him.

If I find that truth and piety are protected by the laws, I am to bless God, and to thank the Government; remembering what a great obligation this is upon me, to obey both God and man with all readiness and cheerfulness.

But how it is possible for me to know the difference between these two cases, without the liberty of private judgment, I am not able to comprehend.

I think no body will say, that absolute obedience to the commands of superiors, and receiving doctrines from them without disputing or thinking farther of it, is an universal duty; for then it would be a sin in a Pagan or Mahometan subject, to think any farther, whether the doctrine which he has received be true or not.

But why it should be no sin, but a virtue, for men that are bred up to a false religion, to think farther of it, and that it should be no virtue, but a sin, to examine the true religion, is, I believe, past the understanding of all wise and honest men; especially since without examination a man can never tell which is true, and which is false.

That there should be but one religion in the world that will bear examination, and yet that it should be a wicked and

mischievous presumption to enter into the examination of it, or for any man to exercise a private judgment about it, and to search as far as he is able into the bottom of it, is, I believe, the darkest riddle in the world.

For my own part, I have used the liberty of a private inquirer, and am so well satisfied with the reasons of my inquiry, and with the effects of it, that I am very well content both should be made public, if it be thought convenient by those that have authority to make them so. In which case, I shall have this satisfaction at least, that these papers may go for some expression of that gratitude which I owe to the Church of England, for the benefits I have received in her communion.

I am in the highest degree sensible of these, amongst many other obligations which she has laid upon me.

That she has not gone about to overwhelm me with a pretence to an infallible authority in deciding controversies of faith, but sincerely and generously laid down that truth before me, which needs no such pretence to support it.

That she has afforded me the means whereby to know that she does indeed teach the truth as it is in Jesus, *viz.* the free use of the holy Scriptures; the holy Scriptures, I say, which are the only rule, and will at last prove the only means of ending those controversies that disturb the peace of the Church; I say it again, the holy Scriptures, which are the only authority that all Churches in the world do acknowledge that they ought to be concluded by, even that Church itself which does all that ever she can to keep them out of our hands.

Lastly, that she has permitted me to read the works of our adversaries; that she has set up no inquisition for books, nor falsified authors by an *Index Expurgatorius*; but that even Bellarmine, Baronius, Binius, with many more writers of the greatest name and authority in the Roman Church, can stand very quietly in the study of a country gentleman, to be used by him according to his own discretion; as he may certainly do without the least prejudice to himself, if he has the ancient Fathers, and much more if he has the holy Scriptures by him too.

I have already said with what temper and discretion this liberty is to be used, and shall only add, that a search for truth so regulated, cannot but be successful in that degree, that a man shall not miss of needful knowledge. For he that is truth itself, hath said,* "If any man will do his will, he shall know

* John vii. 17.

of the doctrine, whether it be of God." In the comfort of which assurance, I would not quit my interest for all that this world is worth.

If men will be honest and sincere, the means which this Church of England affords, will certainly guide them into all truth necessary to salvation. But if they will not be so, all the Churches of the world cannot save them: no, not an infallible Church, if we knew where it was to be had.

POSTSCRIPT.

Whilst these papers were printing off the new Oxford book came to my hand, which pretends to try the English Reformation by eight Theses. I presently saw, that if I tried their eight Theses by that one maxim, that General Councils are not infallible, they would no more be able to bear that trial, than he (whether author or publisher of this book) fancied our Reformation could bear the test of his Theses.

He supposes that the Reformation must needs be invalid upon the account of some irregularities, the principal whereof, and that indeed to which all the rest may be reduced, is, that it wanted the consent of the then major part of the clergy. I have some reason to be pretty confident that he has misrepresented our Reformation in that, and in divers other particulars. However, leaving it to others, that may think it worth their while, to examine his relation of the matters of fact, I shall make bold to attack his Theses, which so unavoidably fall under the argument of the preceding discourses, that I ought not to neglect the occasion of doing this little service, if they are not mistaken who tell me that some service it will be.

I observe, that lest the major part of the then national clergy should be found on the side of the Reformation, he is provided of a good retreat, as he thinks, that though it were so, yet the Reformation by the national clergy is not valid, as being made against the greater part of the western Patriarchate, or of some General Council, as for instance, that of Trent. And therefore, it is plain to me, that the infallibility of General Councils, is that which he relies upon in all his endeavours to invalidate the Reformation. Nor will he deny, I believe, that it is under the protection of this principle, that he gives the determinations and decrees of the lawful national clergy in matters

spiritual, such an authority as ought to prevent all examination, and to overrule all objection against their conclusions. For, according to him, nothing is requisite to make their acts binding, but that they act in subordination to superior Synods, which alone have power to judge whether the inferior are to be obeyed or not, but in the meantime the laity are to follow their leaders. And therefore, if I have a right to examine the doctrines of General Councils themselves, it will go very hard, but I may lawfully inquire, whether the doctrines which are laid before me as divine truths, by a national Synod, be indeed what I am told they are, that I may thank God and my spiritual guides, if I find them to be so ; but that if I find them otherwise, I may also thank God for leading me into the truth, and be able to give a reason to my guides, why I dare not follow them where I make bold to leave them. By consequence, if the foregoing discourses stand, this book, from the Oxford press, must necessarily fall, which has nothing to support it, but the presumed uncontrollable authority of General Councils, whereby all are to be concluded without any more to do. So that nothing else might be needful to answer him, but to shew that he does, indeed, build upon this presumption. But because I have undertaken to see what there is of truth and strength in his Theses, I will briefly and fairly deliver the substance of them, with reflections upon every one as they come, one after another.

Whereas he begins with this proposition : that* “the lawful clergy are Christ’s substitutes to determine controversies in religion, and to decide what is God’s word and divine truth,” &c. and that they have “power to promulgate, teach, and preach such their decisions,” &c. and to “execute ecclesiastical censures upon all such as disobey their authority :” I answer : this proposition, as it is generally and crudely laid down by him, may be true, or it may be false, according to the sense in which it may be understood ; as any body may see by another proposition, which I shall not fear to advance against his, *viz.* that “the clergy, as Christ’s substitutes, have power to determine controversies in religion, and to teach for doctrines, not what they please, but that only which was at first taught by the Apostles and disciples of our Lord Jesus ; and that upon this condition their ecclesiastical censures (which, as he well says, have reference to things not of this, but of the next world) do affect those that disobey their authority.” Now I say, that if the first Thesis, which bears the weight of all the rest, be not limited

* First Thesis.

by this condition which I have expressed, it is false : if it be so limited, it will not make our Reformation invalid for want of the authority of the greater part of the clergy, if that had been wanting : for neither has the greater part of the clergy, nor the whole body of the clergy, any authority from Christ to teach any other doctrine than what the Apostles taught. And by consequence, our obligation to receive and submit to the doctrine of the clergy, under pain of incurring the effect of their censures, is upon condition that they teach no otherwise. Which condition is so evidently to be supposed, that these men with whom we have to do, must suppose it, though they pretend the infallibility of Church-authority in matters of faith, ever since the Apostles' days ; because this is to pretend, that it shall infallibly keep to the Apostles' doctrine in judging of controversies, and in declaring its judgment. But because the present clergy has not those divine testimonies by which the Apostles proved, not only their communion, but their faithful discharge of it, we are in our several stations and capacities free to examine, whether they teach what the Apostles taught, or agreeably thereunto, and that by the rule of the holy Scriptures. We acknowledge, that the power to execute ecclesiastical censures, does belong only to the clergy, but not upon the same hazard to those who disobey them, without which the Apostles could not be disobeyed ; because the clergy may abuse their power. But we say withal, that no man can reject their decisions, and slight their censures, but it is at the peril of his soul, that the cause be just and plain why he does so ; where, when men have talked themselves weary of an absolute power in the clergy to bind princes and people, they will be constrained to leave the matter at last. And if it be left here, had I lived in the days of the Reformation, and understood what I have now attained to, I would, I am sure I ought to have reformed myself, though neither Church nor State had set me the example.

As for what this author produces under this Thesis out of our Protestant writers, concerning the authority and power of the Church, it amounts to this, that the Church is furnished by Christ, with means and power to subsist, not only without, but against the will of the State, when it pleased God to exercise her with sufferings. And this doctrine will not, I think, hurt the Reformation made by the Church of England, which is furnished with such means, and with power to use them for that purpose.

Whereas he tells us,* "That the clergy cannot alienate or

* Second Thesis.

make over and give away to the secular governor, &c. any authority or office which they have received from Christ, with a command to execute the same to the world's end," &c. I must, in the first place, interpose, by telling him, that because this Thesis hangs to the former, he must have a care of meaning an alienation of power to teach what they please, and to inflict censures as they please, for this is a power which they never had ; and therefore, if they would never so fain, they can give it to nobody else. I acknowledge they cannot, without impiety, give over the discharge of that trust which is committed to them by God, but neither can they deprive prince or people of the right they have to examine what they are taught. I acknowledge also, that they cannot alienate any power necessary to the preservation of the Church, so that no act of Church or State can be binding, which shall make it impossible or unlawful for the clergy to maintain the true worship of God, and the profession of the true faith, unless the State concurs with them and protects them in it. I affirm as resolutely as he can do, that the clergy are to appoint ecclesiastical assemblies, as need requires, under a State that *oppresseth* true Christianity. But how far the clergy may depart from the exercise of their right, and yield to the State when it *protects* the same, how far I say, and no farther, they may be content to be tied up by laws, for the preservation of a good establishment, and in consideration of the protection they receive from the State, I am not he that shall presume to say ; nor will he neither, if he be a wise man, unless he has a mind to bring upon himself a necessity either of answering all objections that may be made against the prudence of determining so or so, in a very nice matter, or of confessing his own rashness in meddling with a point that he might as well have left alone. It may suffice both him and me, to say, that the clergy cannot part with that power which is necessary for the subsistence of the Church under a State, that instead of supporting it, labours to overthrow it. But they ought to execute it with thankfulness to God, where the laws protect them in so doing ; and with patience and submission to God's providence where they do not. Now whereas he would insinuate, that our clergy are bound for ever by an act of the Reformation, to the State, not to teach, or reform errors or abuses, without the consent thereof first obtained : this is a most unjust representation of the case, since it implies that abuses may be brought in, and heresies arise, and the clergy must be silent till the secular governor gives them leave to de-

clare against them. But the matter is far otherwise: for we have a sound profession of faith, and a form of worship agreeable to God's word, and rules of discipline and government very serviceable to the common ends of Christianity, established by the act of the clergy and the civil power; to which if we can but keep, heresies and abuses in God's service will be kept out. So that the clergy are at full liberty to declare against heresies and abuses, though by consent of Church and State the ecclesiastical power is by law tied up from assemblies and consultations, for the making of alterations by way of addition to, or subtraction from, what is established by the act of both, without the leave of the secular power. Now they are men in authority, and not a private person, who is to judge whether the restraint were prudently made or not, and time will shew whether they have judged right or not. In the mean time it is sufficient for our purpose to say, that the Church cannot part with the power of holding religious assemblies, of ordaining pastors, of administering sacraments, and exacting the profession of the true faith, and opposing heresies: and whatever restraint from the secular authority, upon the exercise of this power in any of the instances thereof, proves inconsistent at any time with the maintenance of God's service according to the Gospel, it obliges the clergy no farther, than to bear the cross of Christ, and to do what is necessary for the subsistence of the Church, though (as they commonly have been the first that smart for it) they bring upon themselves the penalties of the secular laws. The clergy of this kingdom have not given away their right to do any spiritual act necessary for the maintaining of the Church, though in confidence of the good meaning of the State, they have abridged themselves of the exercise of some part of their power, under penalties which they are obliged to suffer, if ever the cause of God requires it.

To his third proposition: * "That the secular prince cannot depose or eject from the exercise of their office, in his dominions, any of the clergy, either at pleasure, or for any cause which concerns things spiritual, nor introduce others into the places of the ejected, without the consent of the major part of the clergy:" I say, that he talks very loosely and crudely: for the prince cannot eject any of the clergy for doing their office as they ought to do it, though he had the consent of the greater part of the clergy thereunto: for he ought not to

* Third Thesis.

do an unjust thing, either without their consent or with it. And I question not, but if the secular powers do prohibit (as he says) totally, all the clergy from officiating in divine matters, or eject them from doing what is necessary to the maintenance of God's true service, the act is void in itself to all effects, but that of making them liable to the secular laws. But suppose the majority of the clergy in a national Church should turn Arians, must not they be ejected, because they will not give their own consent unto it? Nay, says our author, but superior Synods are to eject them. But what if Arianism prevails in the majority both of the East and West? Time was, that it did so. Is it more desirable that the secular powers should provide for the maintenance of truth with a few, or help to support error with the many? and must the authority of superior Synods be accounted more sacred than the Divinity of our Lord Jesus? Men are too apt to advance or depress the powers of the world in matters of religion, as their interest leads them. I have already said, that they are concerned, as they will answer it to God one day, not to oppress, but to protect the clergy in the doing of their duty. But whenever they turn their authority against the truth of Christianity, the clergy are to appear for it, as they will answer it to God in another world, whatever they lose by it in this. This gentleman will by all means have the secular powers be the instrument of serving superior Synods, and then they may eject with very good authority. But I think truth is superior to Synods, and if princes always serve truth, truth will justify them when Synods cannot. I can tell one case, wherein, if the powers of the world had interposed against the majority of the clergy, the Church of Rome would have had reason to bless their memories for it to this day. Had the Emperor Sigismund, and the other princes interested themselves in the General Councils of Constance and Basil, so far as to eject the bishops that stood up so stoutly for the freedom of Councils, then Martin V. and Eugenius IV. &c. had never, in all probability, confirmed those afore-mentioned decrees in the matter of the supreme Church authority; nor had Leo X. with his Lateran Council, needed to overthrow them by contradictory decrees, to the everlasting confusion of all pretences to infallibility in the Roman Church.

He says,* "That a provincial or national Synod may not

* Fourth Thesis.

lawfully make any definitions in matters of faith, or in reforming some error or heresy, or other abuse in God's service, contrary to the decrees of former superior Synods, &c." than which I know not what can be more false. And I answer; that a national Synod may lawfully define matters of faith, and reform errors and heresies, or other abuses in God's service; and this contrary to the decrees of former superior Synods; and not only may, but ought to do so, since no Synod upon earth hath authority to establish heresies and other abuses, or to excuse inferior Synods if they do not reform them.

"That a Synod, wanting part of the national clergy, unjustly deposed or restrained, and consisting partly of persons unjustly introduced, partly of those who have been first threatened with fines, &c. if they conform not to the prince's injunctions in matters merely spiritual, is not a lawful national Synod, nor the acts thereof free and valid."* To this I answer, reserving all just exceptions against the application of this Thesis, to the case of the English Reformation; that though a Synod, partly wanting some of the clergy, that by ecclesiastical custom are to sit there, and consisting partly of others that are under secular restraints of threatenings, &c. cannot be said to be wholly free, yet if it determines against heresies and other abuses, the determinations of that Synod are right, and ought to be received; and the acts thereof are to be accounted more valid than the acts of the freest Synod in the world, that should establish innovations in the faith, or corruptions in the worship of God.

The substance of the next proposition is this:† "That the judgment or act of the smaller part of the clergy, is not to be accounted the act of the whole," which is undoubtedly true; and it is as true, that the lesser part may judge as the greater ought to have done; in which case, the sentence of the lesser, ought to be accounted of more authority than that of the greater part, judging contrary to truth.

To the seventh:‡ "That no secular person may define any thing contrary to a national Synod, or superior Council:" I answer, that if the seculars be sometimes in the right against the clergy, which yet they should not conclude but upon very plain evidence, the seculars are in that case to be commended, and the clergy have the more reason to be ashamed, by how much more it was their duty not to be in the wrong.

* Fifth Thesis.

† Sixth Thesis.

‡ Seventh Thesis.

As to the eighth :* “That in things of mere ecclesiastical constitution, neither secular power nor national Synods, may make any new canons contrary to the ecclesiastical constitutions of former superior Synods ;” I say, the contrary is true, and that they may, if they find such constitutions prejudicial to the State or Church which they are to take care of. And they have most reason to know whether they be or not.

And now who can wonder that the propositions he has laid down for the trial of our Reformation, are so deceitful, when they all hang upon the supposition of such an authority in the major part of the clergy, as is to bear down all objection, and against which no reason is to be heard : and consequently upon the presumption of their infallibility in matters of faith ; excepting only, that under the last Thesis, which concerns things of mere ecclesiastical constitution, he seems to permit national Synods, and secular powers, to shew reason for their dissent from superior Synods. Than which we desire no greater favour so far : only it is strange, that no reason must be heard against the determination of the major part of the clergy in matters of faith ; but that without more ado the secular powers are bound to make good the act of the Church by temporal penalties ; and the subject, for not feeling the obligation of submitting to the infallible authority of the Church, by which he means the major part of the clergy, is drawn in, if these men can prevail, to answer for it with his life. Now that this is the plain truth of the case, appears by several passages of his book ; and in particular, by this under the first Thesis. “ But if he† (the Christian prince) meaneth here only, where himself first judgeth such their (the clergy’s) decrees orthodox and right, this power is in effect claimed to bind all persons in all spiritual matters only to his own decrees, whilst he pretends an obligation both of himself and of his subjects to the Churches. Now I may suppose, that a private person cannot pretend to more liberty than the prince. And therefore, though the decrees of the Clergy seem to me never so heterodox and wrong, I am still bound to believe them ; and consequently, it were the foolishhest thing in the world for me to examine them by Scripture, or by other good tradition, or by the principles of common sense and reason. For why ? If after such examination I should find them heterodox, I am in a worse case than I was in

* Eighth Thesis.

† Page 3.

before; for I am to believe them still, and that now, under the disadvantage of a monstrous difficulty; that is to say, of believing that to be true upon the authority of the Clergy, which I may have all the reason in the world besides to believe is false. But if upon examination of those decrees by the ways above-mentioned, I find them to be orthodox, this is still worse and worse; for now I do not so much believe them because they are the decrees of the Clergy, as because I first judge such their decrees to be orthodox, which, since this gentleman will not allow to be a sufficient ground for the secular prince to bind his subjects to these decrees, I think it plainly follows, that neither must he allow it to be a sufficient ground for me, a subject, to receive them. And thus farewell to all manner of examination of what we believe; and once more let us bid welcome to the rule of the Bishop of St. Mark:* "The canons determine, that laics have no authority to command, but necessity to obey; and that the Council ought to decree, that seculars ought humbly to obey that doctrine of faith which is given them by the Church, without disputing or thinking further of it." These men have brought religion to a fine pass, and it must be all one to us what we receive; for we have no other duty, but to know from whom we receive it. And yet we must not be too saucy in inquiring into that neither, lest we should find them not only the worsers, but the lesser part too of the clergy of Christendom. In the mean time, I am ashamed to find such principles as these advanced in behalf of the clergy; and instead of making excuses for exposing them, shall only say, that those of our communion ought not to be so foolishly offended at them, as to deny that respect and honour to the clergy of this Church, which is due both to their order and their merit. For the more scandalous it is in the Roman clergy to affect an absolute empire over the reason of mankind, the more are we to praise the clergy of the Church of England for redeeming the reputation of their order, and the honour of Christianity, by standing up for the common interest and liberty of Christendom, for the true rule of faith, and the right that all Christians have to use it.

* Supra p. 203.

BOOK III.

THE POPISH RULE OF FAITH EXAMINED AND DISPROVED,
AS RESTING UPON TRADITION.

SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION COMPARED ;

IN

A SERMON

Preached at Guildhall Chapel, November 27th, 1687.

THE PREFACE.

I intend, God willing, to publish in a little time, a full answer to J. S.'s Catholic Letters, so far as I am concerned in them. In the meanwhile, I thought it not unfit to print this Sermon I lately preached, that I might give a general view of Scripture and Tradition, as to the way of conveying matters of faith, before I come to the particular debate with J. S., wherein I do not doubt, but I shall be able to shew, that we have very good grounds for the certainty of our faith, and that they have none, either as to faith or tradition, as to the main points in controversy between us.

COLOSS. ii. 6.

"AS YE HAVE THEREFORE RECEIVED CHRIST JESUS THE
 * LORD, SO WALK YE IN HIM."

There are two things observable in the manner of St. Paul's expressing himself to the Colossians in this Epistle.

1. That he had a very good opinion of them at present, as appears by the foregoing verse. "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ."

What could be said more to the advantage and honour of a Christian Church? For order is the strength and beauty of any society, uniting the several parts to each other, and thereby preserving and adorning the whole body. And the more there is of this in any Christian Church, the more it resembles the body of Christ, and the greater honour it brings to the Christian profession. Especially, when it is joined with a stedfastness of faith in Christ, *i. e.* with a firm and well settled resolution to adhere to that faith which Christ himself delivered. For the true faith of Christ is not only the mark which distinguishes, but the soul which enlivens the body of the Church, and by its vigour and influence, makes the several parts of it become the living members of Christ's body.

But if all this were seen by St. Paul in the Church of the Colossians, what need he to write so warmly and earnestly as he doth to them? Must we think, as some do, that he uses these expressions as gentle methods of insinuation, and commends them for that, which he would persuade them to? But this doth not seem agreeable to the Apostle's "simplicity and godly sincerity,"* which he elsewhere sets such a value upon. But it is far more probable, that hitherto they had been very orderly and stedfast: but Epaphras going to St. Paul, had informed him thoroughly of their condition, *viz.* that they were like a garrison, closely besieged on all sides; and although hitherto they had held out with great courage, yet he did not know what earnest solicitations, and fair promises, and tempting motives, might do with them; and therefore the Apostle writes this epistle to encourage them in their stedfastness, and to warn them against temptations. Which he doth in such a manner, as shews,

* 2 Cor. i. 12.

2. That he had a more than ordinary apprehension of the danger they were in. "And this I say," saith he, "lest any man should beguile you with enticing words," ver. 4. "And beware lest any man spoil you with philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ," ver. 8. "Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels," &c. ver. 18. All which expressions do imply, that he had just reason to fear, and to give them caution in time, that while they did yet think that they stood, they should take heed lest they fell.

And this is that which the Apostle aims at in the words of the text: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."

Receiving Christ Jesus the Lord doth not here relate to his person, but to his authority, and to his doctrine; so the Apostle himself explains it in the next verse, "Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught."

Walking in him is an eastern way of speaking, and supposes both an adhering to that faith they had then received, and living according to it, looking on Christ and his doctrine as their only way to heaven.

And "as ye have received him, so walk ye in him," implies, that the manner of their receiving Christ and his doctrine, at first, was different from that which the false Apostles endeavoured to bring in among them, and that they were bound to keep close to that pure and primitive doctrine which they at first received.

From hence we may consider a double obligation lying upon them.

1. To keep stedfast to that faith which they first received, without being seduced from it by the arts of deceivers, who were then busy among them.

2. To live according to it, by making that faith the principle of a Christian life, and so walking in him, as they had received him.

1. As to the former, the reasonableness of it cannot but appear from the supposition here made, *viz.* that they had received Christ Jesus the Lord.

For thereby they declared that they received him as the Christ, *i. e.* as him who was anointed of the Father to teach and instruct his Church; and therefore they were bound to

adhere to his doctrine; there being no other whom the Father hath sealed and appointed to declare his will; and * “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

They received him as “Christ Jesus,” that is, they hoped for “redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”† And if their hopes of heaven depended upon his mediation, they had the greatest reason to adhere only to him.

They received him as “Christ Jesus the Lord,” and therefore they ought to submit to his authority, to obey his commands, and to observe his institutions, and in all circumstances of life to keep stedfast to the doctrine which he delivered.

But here arises the great difficulty, how they should know by any certain rule, what was the true and genuine doctrine of Christ, which himself delivered? For,

1. The false teachers among them pretended to deliver the true doctrine of Christ as well as the Apostles.

2. That which they at first received was no certain rule. For the false teachers might have been before them. And first possession gives no title in religion.

3. The Apostle doth not put the whole trial merely upon their judgments, or memories, or capacities; viz. what they thought, or remembered was at first taught them for the doctrine of Christ.

For it was very possible for them to have mistaken, or to have misremembered what was at first delivered.

Nothing can be more weak than to imagine that the judgments of people in matters of faith must be formed according to the skill and excellency of their teachers. For the hearers of Christ himself, although he spake as never man spake, yet did very often mistake his meaning. And at one time so remarkably, that although he took care to rectify their misapprehension, yet it is said, “from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”‡ So that the highest infallibility in the teachers doth not prevent the possibility, or the danger of mistaking in the hearers. And whatsoever any vainly pretend, nothing can do it, but transfusing the spirit of infallibility into all.

If we look over the Apostolical Churches, while they were under the care and conduct of an infallible Spirit; yet this did not prevent their running into great errors and mistakes, as appears by the account we have of them, given by that Spirit which cannot deceive in the Apostolical writings.

* Col. ii. 3.

† Col. i. 14.

‡ John vi. 66.

In the Church of Rome itself, even at that time, when "its faith was spoken of throughout the world,"* yet there were dissensions and differences there, and such as were contrary to the doctrine which was delivered. And St. Paul bids them to mark such which caused them; † he doth not say it was impossible for them to introduce anything contrary to the doctrine which they had learned by tradition from the Apostles; he not only supposes it very possible, but he bids them have a particular eye to them, lest they should be deceived by them.

The Church of Corinth was planted by Paul, and watered by Apollos; and there were disciples of Cephas and of Christ himself. And yet in the midst of so many infallible teachers, they had like to have lost all their faith; as one of them tells them. "How say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." ‡ Could not they remember to-day what was taught them yesterday, and so what the Apostles at first preached to them?

The Churches of Galatia had such an opinion of St. Paul, upon his first preaching the Gospel among them, "that they received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus;" § yet presently after he saith, "Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" || What! of an angel of God, or of one received as Christ Jesus, to become their enemy, and that upon the most unjustifiable account, because he told them the truth! But, where truth can make enemies, errors may easily gain friends. And so we find it was in the Apostolical Churches, even under the conduct and teaching of the Apostles.

The Colossians were not yet so far gone; but they were in such danger that the Apostle writes this epistle with great concernment for them. He tells them he had a sharp conflict in his own mind about them. They had not yet seen his "face in the flesh," ¶ being converted by some sent by him, of whom Epaphras is most taken notice of; but he was present with them "in the spirit," ver. 5. i. e. he was deeply affected with their condition; for he understood the designs and artifices of the seducers among them. He knew what fair and plausible pretences they had, viz. that they went about not to, under-

* Rom. i. 8.

† Chap. xvi. 17.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 12, 14.

§ Gal. iv. 14.

|| Ver. 16.

¶ Col. ii. 1, 4, 5, 6.

mine Christianity, but to advance it, by taking in some Jewish customs, and some Gentile observances, and modes of worship which might easily be accommodated to the Christian doctrine; and so a great deal of the animosities, both of the Jews and Heathens, would be removed; and Christianity would thereby gain more friends, and meet with fewer enemies.

The Apostle finding how necessary it was at this time, if possible; to keep them stedfast in the faith :

1. He assures them that the Christian doctrine was of itself so sufficient for the good of mankind that it needed no additions, either from the law of Moses or the philosophy of the Gentiles, which might introduce several things, with a specious appearance of wisdom, humility, and mortification; but they ought to be assured, that from Christ they had all that was necessary or useful for salvation; "for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."*

2. That this doctrine was at first truly delivered to them, and they ought to be stedfast in it; which is the design of the text.

But they might object, that Epaphras was no Apostle of Christ himself; and if he were, yet there were many Apostles, and the false Apostles pretended to be true ones; and although St. Paul interposed his authority, yet he was but one, and the Judaizers would not yield to it, but were ready to suggest, that the other Apostles were more favourable to the Jewish customs than he; and therefore it was necessary some more general and common rule be found out, whereby to distinguish the original and genuine doctrine of Christ from that of pretenders and seducers.

The clearing of this is in itself a matter of great consequence; and not only was to those of that age, but is so in every age of the Christian Church, where the same question may be put: What was the true primitive doctrine of Christ; and by what means may we come to it? Which concerns us at this day as well as them.

And the answer lay in two particulars, which I shall endeavour to clear.

1. That which the Apostles did in common deliver to the Churches planted by them, was the genuine doctrine of Christ.

2. That which they have left in their writings, after it came to be contested, which was the true doctrine of Christ.

1. That which the Apostles did in common deliver to the Churches planted by them. For, we have all the reason in the world to believe, that the Apostles delivered one and the same faith to all the Churches: having the same infallible Spirit to direct them. There was no need for them to meet together before their dispersion, and to agree upon some common article of faith, as Ruffinus* imagines, lest they should differ from each other; for how could they differ, who had the same "Spirit of truth to lead them into all truth?" and we find nothing like a combination among the Apostles, as to matters of doctrine: and if there had been, it would have rendered the faith they delivered more suspicious, in that they durst not trust particular persons with delivery of it, without an antecedent confederacy among themselves, which would have looked like a mistrust of that promise of the Spirit's being fulfilled, upon all of them. And we find, when the Gospels were to be written, there was no such meeting together, to settle the several parts of it; and yet this was of as much consequence to the Church of God; but St. Matthew writes his Gospel in Judæa, at the time, saith Irenæus,† that Peter and Paul preached and founded a Church in Rome: St. Mark, either at Rome or in Egypt, not till after their decease, saith the very same ancient Father. St. Luke in Greece,‡ after St. Paul planted Churches in Rome; and St John in Asia, after all the rest. But there was the same divine Spirit, which assisted them all, and therefore there was such a concurrence as shewed their veracity, but such a variety as shewed there was no combination.

But it is observable, that none of the Gospels were written till the doctrine of Christ had been preached by the Apostles in many places, and many Churches were formed and established by them. And there were two great advantages thereby.

1. The unity of the faith delivered by the Apostles was the more seen; because then without the help of a written rule, they so unanimously agreed in the doctrines they delivered. Not, as though it were less possible to mistake without it; but, on the contrary, there being a much greater liableness to mistake, so universal a consent was the stronger argument of a Divine assistance. If there had been any difference in the

* Ruffin. in Symbol. John xvi. 13.

† Iren. l. 3. c. 1. [p. 174. Venet. 1734.]

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‡ Euseb. l. 5. c. 18.

doctrines preached by the Apostles, there were so many enemies both of Jews and infidels, and false Apostles, who would presently have reproached the Christian Churches with it. But no disagreement is ever so much as mentioned, as to what the Apostles themselves taught: "They had one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all."* Wherever the Apostles went, whether into Scythia, Parthia, Mesopotamia, or any provinces of the Roman Empire, all who were converted by them were baptized into the same faith, which St. Jude calls "the faith once delivered to the saints."† But once delivered, though by many persons, and in very distant places; and so once delivered, as the same faith once delivered is to continue to the world's end. For nothing can be made the faith of Christ, which was not always so; for that were to lay a new foundation, and to make another covenant than what Christ hath sealed with his blood. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."‡ The terms of salvation can never be altered, unless there be a new Saviour, and new Apostles, and new teachers. But if we go to heaven by Christ, we must go that way that himself hath directed. For men and angels joining their powers together cannot save one soul; Christ alone, "being the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by him."§ This the Apostles very well knew, and were therefore careful to deliver nothing to the Church but what they received from Christ, as St. Paul saith of himself: "For I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you."|| Not by way of tradition from men, but by immediate Divine revelation; for, as he saith, "he was not an Apostle of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father:"¶ and not long after he saith, "for I neither received the gospel of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." "

There was none of all the first preachers of the Gospel so liable to the suspicion of setting up for himself, and varying from the rest as St. Paul was. For he was none of the original number of Apostles, and he was a known persecutor of the disciples of Christ, and sudden converts are always suspected; and Ananias had a vision to satisfy him, and yet he could not tell what to think at first concerning him;

* Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6.

§ John xiv. 6.

† Jude ver. 3.

|| 1 Cor. xi. 23.

‡ Heb. xiii. 8.

¶ Gal. i. 1, 12.

and the disciples when they first heard him "were amazed,"* after this he took a course by himself, and did not go up to Jerusalem to the college of Apostles there resident, but went into Arabia; so that, if any one might be thought to set up another doctrine, it was he; but he was so far from it, that he established and confirmed the truth of what they delivered, and was very successful in his apostleship in all places. And when there had been some whispers concerning him, as though he proceeded not in the same way with the rest, he went up to Jerusalem, and there, upon full examination, James and Cephas, and John, who were the leading Apostles, "gave him the right hand of fellowship:"† in token of their full consent in the same faith.

2. The truth of the Gospel was the more plainly discovered.

All this while, the Apostles only preached and delivered their doctrine to the several Churches by verbal instructions; but after these had been received in the hearts of such multitudes, that there could be no suspicion that a false representation of Christ's doctrine or actions could be received by those Churches, then the wise providence of God took care for posterity, and employed several persons in distant places and times to write the history of our Saviour. And there was this advantage to the Church, that the Gospels were written no sooner. For all the Churches planted by the Apostles, were then made judges, whether the Gospels written, were agreeable to the doctrine which the Apostles had taught; and if not, there would have been just reason to have questioned, either the truth of what had been taught them, or what was delivered in the Gospels.

But when they found the main to be fully consonant to what they had been taught, the testimony of every one of these Churches did shew the concurrence of all the Apostles, as to the doctrine contained in the several Gospels.

And that which adds to the strength of this proof is, that when the true Gospels were written, there were several false and counterfeit Gospels dispersed abroad under the names of the Apostles themselves. As of St. Peter, St. Thomas, St. Matthias, and others; as Eusebius‡ informs us; and as we have the genuine Acts of the Apostles, so there were the pretended Acts of Paul, of Andrew and John, and the other

* Acts ix. 13, 21. Gal. i. 17.

† Chap. ii. 9.

‡ Euseb. Hist. l. 3. c. 25. [p. 97. Par. 1659.]

Apostles. How came these to be rejected, and the other to be carefully received? Here lies the true advantage of original tradition before the written Gospels, that by it the several Churches were enabled to pass a true judgment concerning them, when they came to be dispersed among them. For they could presently tell, whether what they read were agreeable to what they had heard and received from the Apostles. As suppose the Gospel of St. Matthew being published in Judæa, were carried into Mesopotamia or Persia, where many Christian Churches were very early planted; these being thoroughly instructed by the Apostles in all things relating to the life, death, resurrection and doctrine of Christ, could presently judge whether St. Matthew's Gospel agreed with what they had heard or not, and the like holds as to all the Churches in the Roman Empire. So that the consent of the Churches so soon, while the memory of the 'Apostles' doctrine was so fresh in their minds, is in effect the consent of all the Apostles who taught them.

And this is very different from the case of particular persons in some Churches, who might mistake or forget what was taught; for this is a concurrent testimony of all the Apostolical Churches, who could not agree to approve an error in the Gospels contrary to the faith delivered to them; and that while some of the Apostles were still living. For the other Gospels were received and approved before St. John wrote his.

The case had been far otherwise, if no Gospels had been written in that age; for then it might have been suspected, that either the impressions of the first teachers were worn out, or they had been, by degrees, altered from their first apprehensions, by the cunning craftiness of those who lay in wait to deceive them.

After the decease of the Apostles, the common tradition of the Apostolical Churches was useful in these cases.

1. To convey down the authentic writings of the Apostles or Evangelists, which were delivered to any of them.

2. To bear testimony against any pretended writings, which were not first received by the Apostolical Churches, to which they were said to be written. For there can be no negative testimony of more force than that; it being improbable to the utmost degree, that such a Church should not know, or not make known any true Apostolical writings.

3. To overthrow any pretence to a secret tradition from the

Apostles, different from what was seen in the Apostolical writings. And to this purpose Irenæus* and Tertullian, make very good use of the tradition of the Apostolical Churches, against the pretenders to such a tradition, which those Churches were not acquainted with.

But they agree, that the Apostles committed the same doctrine to writing which they preached, and that it might be a foundation and pillar of faith; that this doctrine was contained in the four Gospels; and that the Apostolical Churches did receive them from those who first wrote them, and that within the compass of the Apostolical age.

It was therefore most agreeable in the infinite wisdom of God, in providing for a constant establishment of the faith of his Church in all ages, neither to permit the Gospels to be written till the Churches were planted, nor to be put off to another generation. For, then it would have been plausibly objected: "if these things are true, why were they not recorded, when there were persons living, who were best able to have either proved or confuted them? Then we might have been satisfied one way or other; but now the Jews are dead, and the Apostles are dead; and although there are many left who believe their doctrine, yet this can never reach to the testimony of those who saw and heard the things themselves, or whose doctrine was attested by those who did so." And this is now the mighty advantage of the Church, ever since that the things concerning Christ were written by such persons. With what another kind of authority do those words command our assent,† "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life: for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you;" than if all the testimony concerning Christ were to be resolved into those who heard some say that others told them, they had it from such who saw those who conversed with them who saw Christ in the flesh? At such a distance the authority of a testimony is extremely lessened; which is not like a river which grows greater by running; but like a mineral water,

* Iren. l. 3. c. 3, 4. [ut supra, p. 175, &c.] Tertul. de Præscript. Hær. [p. 213. Par. 1695.]

† 1 John i. 1, 2, 3.

which loses its strength by being carried too far. We find in the time of Papias, who lived but in the second century, the authority of bare tradition was mightily sunk; for Eusebius saith,* "he conversed with the disciples of our Lord and his Apostles." He saith of himself, "that he went up and down to them, to get what he could from them, having a greater esteem of what he could learn from them, than of what was written." And what advantage did this bring to the Church? "It brought some idle opinions into reputation," saith Eusebius, for afterwards they thought it enough to fix them upon Papias. But how was it possible for him to mistake? Eusebius saith, "that being a man of mean capacity, he might easily misunderstand the meaning of what was spoken." But if tradition might fail after such a manner, so near the Apostles' times, then we must be assured of the capacity as well as integrity of those of every age, through whom a tradition passed, or else they might deceive, or be deceived about it.

But God was pleased to provide better for the security of our faith, by causing the Gospels to be written, either by the Apostles themselves, as St. Matthew and St. John, or by the disciples of the chief Apostles, while the others were surviving, as St. Mark and St. Luke; and the latter gives this account of his undertaking to write it, *viz.* "that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed."† His instruction was by an oral tradition; but that, it seems, wanted something to strengthen and confirm it; and that was by St. Luke's writing his Gospel. How could they add any assurance to him, if all the ground of his certainty were to be taken from tradition? St. Luke thought it necessary then, that those things which concerned the life and doctrine of Christ should be put into writing, that they might be more certainly conveyed; and that while they had the testimony of those who were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word.

2. And so I come to the second rule of discerning the primitive doctrine of Christ, *viz.* the writings of the Apostles, when matters of doctrine came to be contested, were the infallible rule, whereby they were to judge, which was the true and genuine doctrine of Christ.

There are some who pretend, that the Apostles' writings were merely accidental and occasional things, but that the

* Euseb. Hist. l. 3. c. 39. [Ibid. p. 110.]

† Luke i. 4.

main design was to lodge the great assurance of the doctrine of Christ, in tradition from one to another; and what they wrote was not to make any rule of faith, but only to give some good advice to those Churches they wrote to.

But I shall now prove, that the writings of the Apostles were intended by the Holy Ghost to be a standing rule, whereby the Church was to judge which was the true and genuine doctrine of Christ.

1. From the reasons and occasions of writing the books of the New Testament.

1. As to the Gospels, we must distinguish the general reason of writing them, from the particular occasions as to the several Gospels. The general reason is to be drawn from the Divine wisdom which inspired and guided them; the particular occasions relate to the circumstances of writing them.

The general reason is that which Irenæus* gives, *viz.* "That the Gospel which they had first preached, was by the will of God put into writing, that it might be a foundation and pillar of our faith." Not merely to keep up the remembrance of it, which Feuarentius yields, and thereby overthrows the infallibility of oral tradition; but that so it may be a certain rule of faith to all ages. "The Evangelists," saith St. Augustin,† "were but Christ's hands, which himself, as the head, directed in writing the Gospels, and therefore we are to look on the Gospels as his own handwriting. The Holy Ghost," saith he, "directed the minds of the Evangelists, as to the order and manner of their writings." Which varied according to the particular occasions, but yet were all subservient to the general reason.

"St. Matthew wrote the first Gospel," saith Eusebius,‡ "to the Jews, to whom he had preached, because going into other parts, he would supply the want of his presence among them by his writing." What need this, if tradition were a certain and infallible way of conveying the doctrine of Christ? St. Chrysostom§ saith, "the Jewish Christians desired him to put into writing, what they had heard him preach." Did not they understand the force of tradition better? Or why should St. Matthew put them out of an infallible way? The author of

* Iren. 1. 3. c. 1. [ut supra, p. 173.]

† Aug. de Consens. Evang. 1. 1. c. 54. [vol. 3. par. 2. p. 26. Par. 1680.] 1. 2. c. 53. [Ibid. p. 54.]

‡ Euseb. 11ist. 1. 3. c. 24. [ut supra, p. 95.]

§ Chrys. Hom. 1. in Matth. [vol. 7. p. 7. Par. 1727.]

the imperfect work on St. Matthew, saith,* “they desired him to write his Gospel, that wherever they went, they might carry an account of their faith with them.” Clemens Alexandrinus saith, “The occasion of writing St. Mark’s Gospel was, that the people were not satisfied with an unwritten delivery of the holy doctrine, and therefore importuned Mark, who was the disciple of St. Peter, that he would leave a monument of his doctrine in writing; which St. Peter understanding by revelation, approved and confirmed his Gospel for the use of the Churches.” Origen saith,† “he wrote it according to St. Peter’s directions.” Epiphanius saith, “by his authority.” Athanasius saith, “it was dictated by him at Rome.”

It seems, that Peter himself did not think fit to leave the doctrine of Christ to an oral tradition, even at Rome, but Irenæus thinks it was written after St. Peter’s decease, who therein differs from the rest, and shews how uncertain mere tradition is. Tertullian‡ saith, “St. Mark’s Gospel was attributed to St. Peter, and St. Luke’s to St. Paul.” St. Jerome mentions the opinion of some, that when St. Paul saith, “according to my Gospel,” he means that of St. Luke.

But St. Luke himself plainly gives an account of the occasion of his writing. St. Ambrose§ thinks, by those who had taken in hand to write of those things which were firmly believed among us, he means the authors of the counterfeit Gospels, as that of the Twelve Apostles and St. Matthias. But we have no evidence that these were older than St. Luke; his meaning is, that in those parts where he was, there were some who did undertake to give an account of the life and actions of Christ, who wanted the advantages which he had; having had great opportunities of knowing circumstances from the eye-witnesses, and therefore he set himself to give an exact relation of them,|| that not only Theophilus, but every one that answers his name, “might know the certainty of the things wherein they had been instructed.” But, did not they

* Opus Imperfect. in Mat. in Prologo. Euseb. l. 2. c. 15. [Ibid. p. 53.]

† Euseb. l. 6. c. 25. [Ibid. p. 226.] Epiphani. Hær. 51. [vol. 1. p. 428. Colon. 1682.] Athanas. in Synopsi. p. 155.

‡ Tertul. c. Marc. l. 4. c. 5. [ut supra, p. 416.] Hieron. de Script. Eccles. [vol. 7. p. 827. Veron. 1725.]

§ Ambros. in Luc. i. 1. [vol. 1. p. 1265. Par. 1686.]

|| Epiph. Hær. 51. [ut supra, p. 429.]

know the certainty of these things by the Apostles' preaching? Yes, but the things they heard might slip out of their memories; "and to prevent this," saith Theophylact,* "St. Luke wrote his Gospel, that they might retain these things with greater certainty." And words that are only spoken are more easily misunderstood; which Maldonat† assigns, is one great reason of the Evangelists writing their several Gospels.

St. John likewise gives an account himself of the reason of his writing; and that the greatest imaginable. "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name."‡ Why "written that ye might believe?" Did the Apostle, in his old age, mistrust the understandings, or the memories of Christians? Was not the Apostle's teaching sufficient to keep up the principles of the Christian faith in the hearts of the people; no, not while St. John himself was yet living? He had certainly a very mean opinion of tradition, that thought it necessary for him to write, that they might believe that "Jesus is the Son of God." For there was no point of faith more necessary than this, which was required of all persons to be owned before baptism.

Yet for all this, and whatever else can be said, St. John thought it necessary "that these things be written, that they might believe."

He lived the longest of any of the Apostles, and therefore saw how little tradition was to be trusted; for it was already corrupted in so weighty a point as the Divinity of Christ.

Cerinthus and his followers allowed the general tradition of the Church, that "Jesus was the Son of God;" but then they gave their own sense of it, by extraordinary favour and adoption. And from hence the Fathers§ agree, that St. John took occasion to write his divine Gospel, to clear this fundamental point of the Christian faith.

And withal, observing that the other Evangelists insisted chiefly on the actions of Christ for one year, viz. after John's imprisonment; he resumes the whole matter, and adds those things which were omitted by the rest; that so the Church

* Theophyl. in Luc. [vol. 1. p. 270. Ven. 1754.]

† Maldonat. Com. in Evang. prol.

‡ John xx. 31.

§ Hieron. Proœm. in Matth. [Ibid. vol. 7. p. 3.] De Script. Eccles. [Ibid. vol. 7. p. 830.] Epiph. Hær. 51. [ut supra, p. 441.] Chrysost. Hom. 1. in Matth. [Ibid. p. 6.] Euseb. 1. 3. c. 24. [Ibid. p. 95.]

might be furnished with a full relation of what was necessary to complete and establish the faith of Christians.

2. As to the Epistles.

The first Epistle we read of in the Christian Church (and in probability the first writing in the New Testament) was the decretal Epistle* of the Council of Jerusalem.

What should make the Apostles put these decrees into writing? They were very short, and concerned the practices of men, and withal, were sent by Barnabas and Paul, and Judas, and Silas. Were not these sufficient to deliver the Apostles' sense to the Churches, without letters from them? What a pitiful thing did they take oral tradition to be, if they thought such men could not by it, give full satisfaction to the Churches of Syria and Cilicia, unless they sent it under their hands.

The Epistle to the Romans was written by St. Paul, on purpose to clear some main points of the Christian doctrine, which were then warmly disputed between the Jews and the Christians, and between the Judaizing Christians and others, as about justification, rejection of the Jews, the difference of meats, &c. And St. Paul took very needless pains in writing that excellent Epistle, if he knew of Christ's appointing a judge of controversies there; or if he thought writing were not a certain way to make a rule of faith, whereby they were to judge in those matters.

The first Epistle to the Corinthians was written not merely to reprove their factions and disorders; but to direct them, and to establish and prove the faith of the resurrection† which was then contested among them. The Epistle was sent by Stephanus and Fortunatus, who could have carried the Apostle's sense without his writing; but there are many weighty things, besides the particular occasions, which are of lasting concernment to the Church in all ages; as there are likewise in his second Epistle to them.

The Epistle to the Galatians was written on occasion of one of the greatest points of controversy at that time, *viz.* the use and obligation of the law of Moses. And St. Paul found by sad experience among them, that it was very possible for those who had the best instructions, either to forget them, or to grow out of love with them, and to be fond of a change: else he would never have said, "O foolish Galatians,‡ who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth?"

* Acts xv. 23.

† 1 Cor. xv. 12.

‡ Gal. iii. 1. i. 6.

And "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel." How ! Was it indeed possible for them to be removed, and to be so soon removed, who had received the faith by the delivery of St. Paul himself? Then, for all that I can see, human nature, taken with all its advantages and motives, and evidences, is a very fallible thing; and if then it might be deceived, and that so easily and grossly; then much more in any following age of the Church; unless human nature be mightily changed for the better, since the Apostles' times; or any teachers since be more effectual than the Apostles, and especially than St. Paul, "who laboured more abundantly than they all."*

The Epistle to the Ephesians, though written upon a general argument, yet doth suppose that they were in continual danger of being deceived; "and tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive."†

And therefore, he advises them to be upon their guard, and to have their armour about them, and one choice part of it, "is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."‡

The Philippians were assaulted by a rude, violent, headstrong faction of Judaizers; which the Apostle bids them to beware of; and writes his Epistle to them for that purpose, and he exhorts them "to stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel."

In the second Epistle to the Thessalonians,|| and in both Epistles to Timothy, he gives notice of a great defection from the Christian faith; he describes the manner of it, "that¶ it shall be with signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth;* speaking lies in hypocrisy, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats; being evil men, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." I meddle not now with the time when this apostasy began; but from hence it is evident, that St. Paul supposed, that those who at first received the Christian faith by tradition from the Apostles themselves, might, notwithstanding, through their own weakness and folly, and

* 1 Cor. xv. 10.

† Ephes. iv. 14.

‡ Chap. vi. 17.

§ Phil. iii. 2. i. 27.

|| 2 Thess. ii. 3.

¶ Ver. 9, 10.

** 1 Tim. iv. 2, 3. 2 Tim. iii. 5.

the artifices of deceivers, be drawn from it ; and that to prevent such mischievous consequences, he knew no better means than a written rule, which he tells Timothy "was able to make him wise to salvation ; and to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

And to name no more, the Colossians were set upon by some who thought to refine Christianity ; or at least to make it more passable in the world, and therefore would have introduced into it some rites of the Jews, some austerities of the Gentiles, some ways of worship which would recommend them to their adversaries ; and upon this occasion he writes this Epistle to them, to convince them that Christianity alone was far beyond any mixtures of the fancies or traditions of men ; and therefore he could give them no better advice, than as they had first received the doctrine of Christ, to continue in it, or in the words of the text, "as they had received Christ Jesus the Lord, so to walk in him."

The design of what I have said is, that although the Gospels and Epistles were written upon particular occasions, yet those occasions were so great and considerable, and the assistance of the Holy Ghost did so direct the hands and pens of the Evangelists and Apostles in writing them, that what they have therein delivered, contains a complete rule of the true and genuine faith, as it was at first delivered to the Church.

But against this, it is objected, that St. Paul himself charged the Thessalonians,† "Brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or epistle." From whence it appears, that there were other traditions to be held, that were not written.

The force of all this will be taken away, if we consider when that Epistle was written ; viz. one of the first which St. Paul wrote, and soon after the former Epistle to the Thessalonians ; which was some time before St. Luke's Gospel, which was first received in the Churches of Greece, planted by St. Paul. Therefore all the proper doctrine of Christ himself, and all that relates to his life and actions, were then but traditions among them ; and therefore St. Paul had great reason then to require them "to stand fast to the traditions they had been taught;" i. e. to the doctrine of Christ they had received in that manner.

* 2 Tim. iii 15, 17.

† 2 Thess. ii. 15.

But it is urged* that he mentions before, something he had said about Antichrist's coming, when he was with them, ver. 5.

If this be allowed, it will be more against than for tradition. For what has become of that tradition? If it be lost, then it follows that tradition is no infallible way of conveyance; and therefore we have more reason to adhere to a written word.

2. Which leads us to the second reason, from which I designed to prove that there ought to be a written rule for discerning true primitive Christianity; and that is, from the notorious uncertainty of mere tradition. I say, notorious, because there never was any trial made of it, but it failed, even when it had the greatest advantages.

I might insist upon the tradition of the first ages of the world; when men's lives were so long, and the principles of natural religion so few; and yet both before and after the flood, mankind was strangely degenerated from them.

I might insist on many instances in the first ages of the Christian Church; so many, that scarce one can be produced wherein they pleaded mere tradition, but they were mistaken in it; as about the millenium, the age of Christ, the time of Easter (on one side or other), the communicating infants. For St. Augustin† quotes Apostolical tradition for it.

But I shall wave all these, and only mention a very necessary and important thing, which was a long time trusted to tradition, and yet they differed so much about it, as evidently proved that mere tradition was no infallible means of conveyance. And that is, about the Apostles' Creed, which was to be repeated by all that were baptized.

We have many plain testimonies to prove, that this was not to be written; but to be conveyed from one to another, by an oral tradition;‡ St. Jerome,§ St. Augustin,|| Ruffinus, all affirm it.

* Bell de verbo. l. 4. c. 5.

† Aug. de Peccat. Meritis. l. 1. c. 4. [c. 24. ut supra, vol. 10. p. 19.]

‡ In Symbolo Fidei et Spei nostræ, quod ab Apostolis traditum, non scribitur in Charta et Atramento, sed in tabulis cordis carnalibus. Hieron. ad Pammachium advers. Errores Joh. Hierosol.

§ Nec ut eadem verba Symboli teneatis, ullo modo debetis scribere, sed audiendo perdiscere; nec cum didiceritis, scribere, sed memoriâ semper tenere et recolere. August. de Diversis Serm. 75. [Serm. 212. ut supra, vol. 5. p. 938.]

|| Idcirco denique hæc non scribi chartulis et membranis, sed requiri credentium cordibus tradiderunt, ut certum esset hæc neminem ex lectione, quæ interdum pervenire etiam ad infideles solet, sed ex Apostolorum traditione didicisse. Ruffinus in Symbol.

And the Creed was commonly then called* “the Rule of Faith;” which shewed, that they looked on all the articles therein contained, as the standard of necessary points.

And yet there is a plain and considerable difference in the ancient Creeds; some articles being in some, which were not in others: although we have reason to believe, the necessary points were at first the same in all. Or else the several Churches must have different rules of faith.

The Church of Jerusalem was called† “the Mother of all Churches,” by the General Council of Constantinople; and in the Creed there delivered to the Catechumens,‡ St. Cyril mentions the “eternal generation of the Son before all worlds;” and so doth§ Eusebius of Cæsarea, in the Creed which he saith, “he learnt at his baptism,” which was long before the Nicene Creed.|| Cassian makes it a part of that Creed which the Apostles delivered to the Church, and was particularly received in the Church of Antioch.

But no such thing was delivered in the Western Creeds, as far as now appears, by what St. Augustin, Ruffinus, and others say in their expositions of it.

St. Jerome, writing against the bishop of Jerusalem, urges him with the Creed¶ (no doubt that which was received in his own Church), and he saith, “it consisteth of three main points, the confession of the Trinity, the unity of the Church, and the resurrection of the flesh.”

And the Creed of the Church of Aquileia went no farther, saith** Ruffinus; nor some old copies of the Roman Creed.

But Marcellus of Ancyra, had “eternal life” in his†† Creed, and so had‡‡ Cyril of Jerusalem; so had the African Church in St. Augustin’s§§ time; so had the Church of Ravenna;

* Tertul. de Præscript. c. 12, 13, 14, 21. [ut supra, p. 206, 207, 209.] De Virgin. vel. c. 1. [Ibid. p. 173.] Advers. Praxeam c. 2. [Ibid. p. 501.] August. Sermon. 59, 186, 213. [Ibid. p. 343, 885, 938.] Retract. l. 2. c. 3. [Ibid. vol. 1. p. 43.] Enchirid. de Fide, n. 15. [Ibid. vol. 6. p. 217.] De Symbolo ad Catech. [Ibid. p. 548.] Ruffin. in Proœm.

† Theod. l. 5. c. 9. [p. 207. Cantab. 1720.]

‡ Cyril. Catech. 11. [p. 149. Venet. 1753.]

§ Theod. l. 1. c. 12. [Ibid. p. 38.]

|| Cassian. de Incarnat. l. 6. c. 3, 4.

¶ Hieron. ad Pammach.

** Ruffin. in Symbol. p. 191. V. Usser. de Sym. p. 8, 9.

†† Epiph. Hæres. 72. [ut supra, p. 836.]

‡‡ Cyril. Catech. 18. [ut supra, p. 285.]

§§ Aug. de Symb. l. 1. [Ibid. vol. 3. par. 1. p. 556.] Petr. Chrysol. Sermon. 57, &c.

but not the Church of Turin ; nor the Gallican Churches ; if Maximus Taurinensis, and Venantius Fortunatus explained all the articles of their Creeds.

Ruffinus confesses the article of the “ descent into hell,” was not in the Roman, nor in any of the Eastern Creeds.

The Creeds of Jerusalem and Aquileia, had not “ the communion of saints ;” nor those of Marcellus and Epiphanius.*

The title of “ Catholic” was not added to the Church in the Creed in St. Augustin’s† time ; for he makes it a periphrasis, *utique Catholicam*, from whence, probably, it came to be added afterwards.

Ruffinus takes no notice of it, and it was not extant in the old copies of the Roman Creed ; nor in that of Marcellus Ancyranus.

These things I mention, not in the least to shake the faith of the articles of the Apostles’ Creed ; which St. Augustin‡ saith, “ was gathered out of Scriptures,” and is agreeable to them ; but to shew what an uncertain way of conveyance mere oral tradition is, when a thing so easily remembered, so constantly used, of so much weight and consequence, fell into such varieties in the greatest Churches, while they were so scrupulous about the writing of it.

What cause have we then to be thankful to God, that hath taken so much care of his Church, as to provide us an infallible written rule in the holy Scriptures, whereby we certainly know what the true primitive Christianity was, which was delivered by Christ and his Apostles ?

But here is a great difficulty to be removed, as to the written word.

“ How can we be certain we have it, if not by tradition ? And if tradition be so uncertain, how can we be made certain by it, that we have that written word which the Apostles delivered ? For might not that fail in this, as well as the Creed ? And then what security can we have for our faith ?”

In answer to this, I shall shew,

1. What advantage things that are written have, as to the certainty of conveyance, above things merely committed to memory and tradition.

* Epiph. Anchorat.

† August. de Fide et Symbolo. [ut supra, vol. 6. p. 161.] Et Symbolo Serm. 243. [Serm. 213. Ibid. p. 941.]

‡ De Symbolo ad Catech. c. 1. [Ibid. vol. 6. p. 547.]

2. What advantage the Scriptures have, above any other things committed to writing, as to the certainty of their conveyance.

1. As to the advantage things written have, above those committed to memory and tradition only. Which will appear by these things.

1. It was the way God himself made choice of, where the reason for tradition was stronger; I mean as to the Ten Commandments, which were short and plain, and easy to be remembered, and very agreeable to the sense and general interest of mankind; yet the wise God, who perfectly understood the nature of man, would not leave the Ten Commandments to an oral tradition, but God delivered to Moses two tables of stone,* written with the finger of God; and on them he wrote the Ten Commandments. What a vain and superfluous thing were this, if oral and practical tradition were infallible? But God's own pitching upon this way, after so long a trial of mankind in the other; is a demonstration of the greater certainty of it, if we suppose that God aimed at the benefit of mankind by it.

2. When religion was corrupted among the Jews, the only way of restoring it was by a written book of the law.

As we find in the case of Josiah's† reformation, which was made by the book of the law, which was found in the house of the Lord.

This was the rule by which Hilkiah the high-priest thought it necessary for Josiah to go by; and not by any tradition left among them concerning the law which God had given by Moses.

3. This was that which our Saviour appealed to in all his disputes: "Search the Scriptures,"‡ saith he to the Jews; not run to your traditions, for those were then very corrupt, especially about the Messias, as that he was to be a temporal prince, &c. which was then a dangerous and fundamental mistake; and therefore Christ appeals from them to the Scriptures: "And they are they which testify of me. Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me; but if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"§ And our Saviour severely checks the Pharisees

* Deut. ix. 10. chap. x. 4.

† 2 Kings xxii. 8. chap. xxiii. 2, 3.

‡ John v. 39.

§ Ver. 46, 47.

for regarding their own traditions more than the written law ;* and yet they pretended to an oral tradition down from Moses ; as the Jews do to this day ; and none are more grossly deceived than they.

4. The general sense and experience of mankind agrees herein, that all matters of consequence are more certainly preserved by writings than by mere words. There is no invention hath been more valued by the wiser part of mankind than that of letters ; because it is of such excellent use for conveying the sense of our minds at a distance to others. All men have so great a mistrust, either of the capacity, or memory, or fidelity of others ; that what they would have done with security, they commit to writing. And whatever we truly understand of the ages before us, we are beholden to writing for it ; all those memorable actions and institutions, either of philosophy or religion, which were not written, are long since buried in oblivion, without possibility of a resurrection.

But where they have been committed to writing, they are preserved after so many ages ; and by it we certainly know the history of the patriarchs, and the strange revolutions that happened from the beginning of the world. By it, we converse with the wisest persons of former times ; and are able to justify the Scriptures by the concurrent testimonies of other writers. By it, we are enabled to interpret prophecies, and to make plain their accomplishments, which, without it, we could never make out. Yea, by it, the wisdom of those is preserved for the benefit of mankind, who thought fit to write nothing themselves, as Socrates and Pythagoras, but their disciples took care, in time, to write their doctrines. So that we have the general consent of the wisest part of mankind, that writing is a far more certain way of conveyance, than mere tradition.

2. And especially in our case, where there are so many particular advantages, as to the holy Scriptures, above any other writings.

1. From the special Providence of God, with respect to them ; for since it is agreed by* all Christians, that these were written by Divine inspiration, it is most reasonable to believe, that a more than ordinary care would be taken to preserve them.

* Matth. xv. 3, 9.

And, therefore, to suppose any books of Scripture to be lost, which contained any necessary points of faith, is a great reflection on Divine Providence. For, if God watches over his Church, he cannot be supposed to let such books be lost, which were designed for the universal and lasting benefit of his Church.

2. From the mighty esteem which the Church of God had always for them ; for, they built their hopes of heaven upon the promises contained in them. The book of Scripture was their evidence for their future inheritance ; the foundation of their hope, and rule of their faith ; their defence against assaults and temptations ; their counsellor in cases of difficulty ; their support under troubles ; and their surest guide to a happy eternity ; and, therefore, the primitive Christians chose rather to endure any torments than basely to betray it, and give it up to their enemies.

3. From the early disputes that were about them. Which shews that they were no invention of after times ; nor were brought into the world by stealth and art ; for they endured the greatest shock of opposition at first, while the matters of fact concerning them were the most easily proved. And having passed the severe scrutiny of the first ages, when so many counterfeit writings were sent abroad, the following ages could have no reason to call their authority in question.

4. From the general consent of divided Churches about them. It might have pleased God to have kept his Church from those unhappy breaches which have been in all parts of the Christian world ; but the east and the west, the north and the south, can all bear testimony to the sad divisions of Christendom ; and those of many ages standing. But yet we have this considerable advantage by them, that we can have no reason to mistrust a conspiracy, where the several bodies are so much divided.

5. From the great internal satisfaction which the minds of good men have concerning them ; and which no other writing can pretend to give. For here we read of the promise of Divine assistance to sincere and humble minds. And that assistance carries a *Lumen Fidei* into the mind ; as Aquinas calls it, 2. 2. a 3. ad 2. "and by that," he saith, "the mind is united to truth, that its assent is only fixed upon it ; and therefore there is no danger of damnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, and are thus illuminated by faith in him." Not that this is an argument to convince others, who have not that

inward sense which they have ; but the same Holy Spirit which did at first indite them, may give such an inward and effectual testimony, as to the truth of the matter contained in them ; that from thence they may firmly conclude these books to contain the Word of God. And that assurance which the minds of good men have from the influence of Divine grace, may be more effectual and powerful in them, than all the pretended infallibility or demonstration in the world. It is certain those cannot be deceived whom the Holy Spirit teacheth ; and the best and wisest of the ancient schoolmen, did make the great firmness and certainty of faith, not to depend on outward motives, but on inward grace ; which so enlightened the mind, and fixed the inclinations of the soul, that nothing is able to remove it. This sort of faith is no blind assent ; but after all the evidence which it hath to make its assent reasonable ; it takes so fast a hold of Divine truths, by discerning the excellency and value of them, that he that hath it is willing to let go any thing rather than that ; and although the apprehension of faith be not so clear as that of science, yet the *hypostasis*,* as the Apostle calls it, may be so firm, that no temptations may be able to shake it. And he that can die for his religion, hath a stronger and better faith than he that thinks himself never so infallible in the grounds of it. That is a true Divine faith, “which purifies the heart,”† and thereby enlightens the mind ; which “works by love,”‡ and not by cavilling and wrangling about the grounds of it ; “which overcomes the world,”§ and not that which is overcome by the temptations of it. And such a faith, and only such a one will carry us to heaven ; when, if it were possible for us to have the utmost infallibility in the act of believing, yet if it did not work effectually on our hearts and lives, we might go infallibly to hell.

And so I shall conclude this discourse, with the second sense of the obligation which lies on those who “have received Christ Jesus the Lord,” so to walk in him ; *i. e.* to improve their sound faith into the practice of a good life.

For alas ! what advantage will it be to us, to have the most primitive and Apostolical faith, if our works be not answerable to it ? “Why call ye me Lord, Lord,” saith Christ, “and do not the things which I say?” || Why do we pretend to “receive Christ

* Heb. xi. 1.

† Acts xv. 9.

‡ Gal. v. 6.

§ 1 John v. 4.

|| Luke vi. 46.

Jesus the Lord," if we do not observe his commands? "It is good," saith St. Paul, "to be zealously affected always in a good thing."* And no doubt, our faith is such; but then let us be zealous of good works too, that we may shew ourselves to be that peculiar people who are redeemed by Christ Jesus.† So that our obligation arises every way from "Christ Jesus the Lord," to walk in him; if we consider him as our Lord, so we are to obey him; if as Christ Jesus, so he died for us to redeem us from all iniquity. We can have no pretence to live in our sins, if we have received him who commands us to forsake them; for then we receive and reject him at the same time. "Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity,"‡ saith St. Paul; what should those then do that profess to receive him as their Lord, who are thereby bound to yield obedience to his laws? One of the great causes of the degeneracy of the heathen world, was the separating of religion and morality; when this was left to the schools of philosophers to instruct men in, whereas their religion consisted only of some solemn rites and sacrifices. Let us have a care of as dangerous a separation between faith and works, or, which is all one, between receiving Christ, and doing his will. For those are the proper works of the Gospel, wherein we own Christ as our Lord, and do them, because he commands us. And the Apostle has summed up the whole duty of Christians in those comprehensive words, "Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."§ To whom, &c.

* Gal. iv. 18.

† Tit. ii. 14.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

§ Tit. ii. 12, 13.

A DISCOURSE ABOUT TRADITION :

SHEWING

WHAT IS MEANT BY IT, AND WHAT TRADITION IS TO BE RECEIVED, AND WHAT TRADITION IS TO BE REJECTED.

AN obligation being laid upon us at our baptism, to believe and to do the whole will of God, revealed unto us by Christ Jesus ; it concerns every one that would be saved, to inquire where that whole, entire will of God is to be found ? where he may so certainly meet with it, and be so informed about it, that he may rest satisfied he hath it all ?

And there would be no difficulty in this matter, had not the worldly interests of some men raised controversies about it ; and made that intricate and perplexed, which, in itself, is easy and plain. For the rehearsal of the Apostles' Creed at baptism, and of that alone, as a summary of that faith, whose sincere profession entitles us to the grace there conferred, warrants the doctrine of the Church of England, and its sixth Article, that the " Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation ; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

But this strikes off so many of the doctrines of the present Roman Church, which are not to be found in the Scripture, nor have any countenance there, that they are forced to say : " The faith once delivered to the saints" (mentioned by St. Jude) is not entirely delivered in the Scripture ; but we must seek for the rest in the traditions of the Church. Which traditions, say they, are to be received as a part of the rule of faith, with the same religious reverence that we do the holy Scripture.

Now, though this is not really the bottom of their hearts (as

will appear before I have done), but they finally rest for their satisfaction in matters of faith somewhere else ; yet this being plausibly pretended by them, in their own justification, that they follow tradition ; and in their accusations of us, that we forsake tradition : I shall briefly let all our people see, who are not willing to be deceived, what they are to judge and say in this business of tradition. About which a great noise is made, as if we durst not stand to it, and as if they of the Roman Church stedfastly kept it without any variation ; neither of which is true, as I shall plainly shew in this short discourse.

The meaning of the Word.

Which for clearness sake shall begin with the meaning of the word TRADITION : which in English, is no more than *delivering* unto another ; and by a figure, signifies, *the matter which is delivered* ; and among Christians, the doctrines of our religion delivered to us. And there being two ways of delivering doctrines to us, either by writing or by word of mouth ; it signifies either of them indifferently : the Scriptures, as you shall see presently, being Traditions. But custom hath determined this word to the last of these ways, and distinguished Tradition from Scripture, or Writings ; at least from the holy Writings ; and made it signify that which is not delivered in the holy Scriptures or Writings. For though the Scripture be Tradition also, and the very first Tradition, and the fountain of all true and legitimate antiquity, yet, in common language, Traditions now are such ancient doctrines as are conveyed to us some other way ; whether by word of mouth, as some will have it, from one generation to another ; or by human writings, which are not of the same authority with the holy Scriptures.

How to judge of them.

Now there is no better way to judge aright of such Traditions, than by considering these four things.

First, The authors of them, whence they come.

Secondly, The matter of them.

Thirdly, Their authority.

Fourthly, The means by which we come to know they derive themselves from such authors as they pretend unto ; and consequently have any authority to demand admission into our belief.

1. For the first of these, every body knows and confesses that all traditions suppose some author, from whom they

originally come, and who is the deliverer of those doctrines to Christian people; who being told by the present Church, or any person in it, that such and such doctrines are to be received, though not contained in the holy Scriptures, because they are traditions; ought in conscience to inquire from whom those traditions come, or who first delivered them: by which means they will be able to judge, what credit is to be given to them, when it is once cleared to them from what authors they really come. Now whatsoever is delivered to us in Christianity, comes either from Christ, or from his Apostles, or from the Church (either in general, or in part), or from private doctors in the Church. There is nothing now called a tradition in the Christian world, but proceeds from one or from all of these four originals.

2. And the matter which they deliver to us (which is next to be considered), is either concerning that faith, and godly life, which is necessary to salvation: or concerning opinions, rites, ceremonies, customs, and things belonging to order. Both which, as I said, may be conveyed either by writing or without writing; by the divine writings, or by human writings: though these two ways are not alike certain.

3. Now it is evident to every understanding, that things of both sorts, which are delivered to us, have their authority from the credit of the author from whence they first come. If that be divine, their authority be divine: if it be only human, their authority can be no more. And among human authors, if their credit be great, the authority of what they deliver is great; if it be little, its authority is little; and accordingly must be accepted with greater or lesser reverence.

Upon which score, whatsoever can be made to appear to come from Christ, it hath the highest authority, and ought to be received with absolute submission to it, because he is the Son of God. And likewise, whatsoever appears to have been delivered by the Apostles in his name, hath the same authority; they being his ministers, sent by him, as he was by God the Father; and indued with a Divine power, which attested unto them. In like manner, whatsoever is delivered by the Church, hath the same authority which the Church hath: which though it be not equal to the foregoing (the Church having no such Divine power, nor infallible judgment, as the Apostles had), yet is of such weight and moment that it ought to be revered next to theirs. I mean, the sense of the whole Church; which must be acknowledged also to be of

greater or lesser authority, as it was nearer or farther off from the times of the Apostles. What was delivered by their immediate followers, ought to weigh so much with us, as to have the greatest human authority, and to be looked upon as little less than divine. The universal consent of the next generation, is an authority approaching as near to the former as the ages do one to another. But what is delivered in later times hath less human authority, though pretending to come, but without proof, from more early days ; and hath no authority at all, if it contradict the sense of the Church, when it was capable to be better acquainted with the mind of Christ and of his Apostles.

As for particular Churches, their authority ought to be revered by every member of them ; when they profess to deliver the sense of the Church universal ; and when they determine, as they have power to do, controversies of faith, or decree rites and ceremonies (not contrary to God's word), in which every one ought to acquiesce.

But we cannot say the same of that which comes from any private doctor in the Church, modern or ancient ; which can have no greater authority than he himself was of ; but is more or less credible, according as he was more or less diligent, knowing, and strictly religious.

1. But to all this, it is necessary that it do sufficiently appear, that such doctrines do really come from those authors, whose traditions they pretend to be. This is the great, and the only thing, about which there is any question among sober and judicious persons : how to be sufficiently assured, that any thing which is not delivered unto us in the Scriptures, doth certainly come ; for instance, from Christ, or his holy Apostles. For in this all Christians are agreed, that whatsoever was delivered by Christ, from God the Father, or by the Apostles from Christ, is to be embraced and firmly retained, whether it be written or not written ; that makes no difference at all, if we can be certain it came from him or them. For what is contained in the holy Scripture, hath not its authority because it is written ; but because it came from God. If Christ said a thing, it is enough, we ought to submit unto it ; but we must first know that he said it ; and let the means of knowing it be what they will, if we certainly know he said it, we yield to it.

But how we can be certain (at this distance of time from his being in the world) that any thing, now pretending to it,

was said by Christ, which is not recorded in the holy Scriptures; there is the business. And it is a matter of such importance, that it cannot be expected any man should be satisfied without very good evidence of it: but he may very reasonably question, whether many things be not falsely ascribed unto him, and unto his Apostles; which never came from them. Nay, whether those things, which are affirmed to be the doctrines of the primitive Church, and of the whole Church, be not of some later original; and of some particular Church, or private doctors in the Church; unto whose authority that reverence is not due, which ought to be paid, and which we willingly give unto the former.

Now according to this state of the matter, any good Christian among us (who is desirous to know the truth, and to preserve himself from error) may easily discern what traditions ought to be received and held fast; and what we are not bound unto, without any alteration; and what are not to be received at all, but to be rejected; and how far those things are from being credible, which the Roman Church now would obtrude upon us, under the name of Apostolical, or ancient traditions; without any authority from the holy Scriptures, or (in truth) any authority but their own, and some private doctors, whose opinions cannot challenge an absolute submission to them.

But to give every one, that would be rightly informed, fuller satisfaction in this business, I shall not content myself with this general discourse, but shall particularly and distinctly shew what traditions we own, and heartily receive; and then what traditions we cannot own, but with good reason refuse. These shall be the two parts of this short treatise; wherein I shall endeavour, that our people may be instructed not merely to reject errors, but also to affirm the truth.

PART I.

WHAT TRADITIONS WE RECEIVE.

1. AND in the first place we acknowledge, that what is now holy Scripture, was once only Tradition; properly so called; that is, doctrine by word of mouth. In this we all agree, I say, that the whole Gospel or doctrine of Christ, which is now upon record in those books we call the Scriptures, was

once unwritten, when it was first preached by our blessed Saviour and his Apostles.

Which must be noted, to remove that small objection, with which they of the Roman Church are wont to trouble some people's minds, merely from the name of Traditions; which St. Paul, in his Epistles, requires those to whom he writes carefully to observe: particularly in that famous place, 2 Thess. ii. 15, where we find this exhortation, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions, which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle."

Behold, say they, here are things not written, but delivered by word of mouth, which the Thessalonians are commanded to hold. Very true (should the people of our Church say, to those that insist upon this), but, behold also, we beseech you, *what* the traditions are of which the Apostle here writes; and mark also *when* it was that they were partly unwritten.

For the first of these, it is manifest that he means by Traditions, the doctrines which we now read in the holy Scriptures. For the very first word, *therefore*, is an indication that this verse is an inference, from what he had said in the foregoing. Now the things he before treated of, are the grand doctrines of the Gospel, or the way of salvation revealed unto us by Christ Jesus, from God the Father; who "hath from the beginning" (saith he, ver. 13, 14), "chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, whereunto he hath called you," &c. This is the sum of the Gospel, and whatsoever he had delivered unto them about these matters, of their sanctification, or of their faith, or of their salvation, by obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (to which they were chosen, and called, through their sanctification, and faith), this he exhorts them to hold fast; whether it was contained in this epistle, or in his former preaching; for he had not occasion now to write all that he had formerly delivered by word of mouth.

Which afterward was put into writing: for mark (which is the second thing) the time when some things remained unwritten; which was, when this epistle was sent to the Thessalonians. Then some things concerning their salvation, were not contained in this letter: but, as yet, delivered only by word of mouth unto this Church. I say, to this Church; for it doth not follow, that all Churches whatsoever, were, at the time of the writing of this Epistle, without the doctrine of the Gospel completely written, because among the Thessalonians

some traditions or doctrines were as yet unwritten : which can in reason be extended no farther than to themselves, and to this Epistle ; which did not contain all the evangelical doctrine, though other writings, which it is possible were then extant in some other Churches, did.

And, I say, as yet unwritten in that Church ; because the Thessalonians, no doubt, had afterward more communicated to them in writing, besides this Epistle, or the former either : *viz.* all the Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, and other Apostolical Epistles, which we now enjoy. Which writings, we may be confident, contain the traditions, which the Apostle had delivered to the Thessalonians, by word : concerning the incarnation, birth, life, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of our blessed Saviour ; and concerning the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the mission of the Apostles ; and all the rest which is there recorded for our everlasting instruction.

And therefore, it is in vain to argue from this place, that there are still, at this day, some unwritten traditions, which we are to follow : unless the Apostle had said, “hold the traditions which ye have been taught by word, which shall never be written.” And it is in vain for us to inquire after any such traditions, or to rely upon them when they are offered unto us ; unless we were sure that there was something necessary to our salvation, delivered in their sermons, which was never to be delivered in writing ; and unless we knew where to find it, as certainly as we do that which they have committed to writing.

And it is to no more purpose to shew us the word Tradition, in other places of St. Paul's writings, particularly in the third chapter of the same Epistle, ver. 6, where, by “tradition,” St. Chrysostom understands the Apostle's “example,” which he had given them ; and so it follows, ver. 7, “for yourselves know, how you ought to follow us,” &c. or it may refer to the commandment he had given them in his former Epistle, iv. 11. (which the reader may be pleased to compare with this), but cannot with any colour be expounded to signify any doctrine of faith, about which the Roman Church now contends with us. For it is plain, it hath respect to their good manners, and orderly living ; for the information of which we need go no whither, but to the holy Scriptures ; wherein we are taught fully enough how we ought to walk, and please God in all things.

The same may said of that place, 1 Cor. xi. 2 : “Now I

praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the traditions (or ordinances, as we render it, or precepts, as the vulgar Latin itself hath it) as I delivered them unto you." For we are so observant of what he hath delivered, that we are confident, if St. Paul were now alive, and in this Church, he would praise us (as he doth the Corinthians) for keeping the Traditions, as he delivered them; and on the contrary, reprove and condemn the Roman Church, for not keeping them, as they were first delivered. And we have good ground for this confidence; there being an instance in that very chapter, which demonstrates our fidelity in preserving the very first traditions, and their unfaithfulness in letting them go. For he tells us, ver. 23, that he had "delivered to them, what he had received of the Lord;" and that which he had received and delivered, was about the whole communion (as you may read there and in the following verses, 24, 25) in both kinds; the cup, as well as the bread. Thus, he saith, the Lord appointed it, and thus he delivered it; and this Tradition we keep entire, as he received it of the Lord, and delivered to his Church, in this Epistle; which is a part of the holy Scripture: whereas they do not keep it, but have broken this Divine Tradition, and give the communion of Christ's body and blood otherwise than St. Paul delivered, keeping the cup from the people.

By which, I desire all that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, to judge which Church keeps closest to the Apostolical Tradition (for so St. Paul calls this doctrine of the communion in both kinds; that which he "delivered," or left as a tradition with them); they that stick to what is unquestionably the Apostolical doctrine, or they that leave it, to follow those doctrines (or presumptions rather) which at the best are very dubious and uncertain.

And farther, I desire all that read this paper, to consider, whether it be reasonable to think, that those rites which have no authority in the holy Scripture (but were instituted, perhaps, by the Apostles) have been kept pure and uncorrupted, according to their first intention; when those sacred rites (for instance, the holy eucharist) are not preserved entire, which are manifestly ordained in the holy writings.

And so much may serve for the first thing; for it would be too long to explain all the rest of the places of holy Scripture, which they are wont to allege (though the word Tradition be not mentioned in them) to give a colour to their present

pretences; how pertinently, may be judged by these places now considered.

2. Secondly then, That word of God which was once unwritten being now written, we acknowledge ourselves to be much indebted to the Church of God in all foregoing ages, which hath preserved the Scriptures and delivered them down to us, as his Word; which we ought to do unto those that shall succeed us; as our Church teacheth us in its twentieth Article; where the Church is affirmed to be "a witness and a keeper of holy Writ."

This Tradition we own; it being universal, continued, uninterrupted, and undenied. Though, in truth, this is tradition in another sense of the word; not signifying the doctrine delivered unto us, but the manner and means of its delivery.

And therefore, if any member of our Church be pressed by those of the Romish persuasion, with this argument, for their present traditions, that Scripture itself is come to us by tradition, let them answer thus: "Very right, it is so, and we thank God for it; therefore let this be no part of our dispute; it being a thing presupposed in all discourses about religion, a thing agreed among all Christian people, that we read the Word of God when we read the holy Scriptures. Which being delivered to us, and accepted by us as his word, we see no necessity of any other tradition or doctrine, which is not to be found there, or cannot be proved from thence; for they tell us, they are able to make, even the man of God, wise unto salvation."

And if they press you again, and say, "How do you know that some books are canonical and others not; is it not by a constant tradition?" answer them again in this manner: "Yes, this is true also, and would to God you would stand to this universal tradition; and receive no other books but what have been so delivered. But know withal, that this universal tradition of the books of Scripture (unto which you have added several apocryphal writings, which have not been constantly delivered, as those we receive) is no part of the tradition or doctrine delivered. That is, no doctrine distinct from the Scriptures; but only the instrument or means of conveying that doctrine unto us."

In short, it is the fidelity of the Church with whom the canon of Scripture was deposited: but is no more a doctrine, not written in the Scripture, that the tradition or delivery of

the code or book of the civil law, is any opinion or law not written in that code.

And we are more assured of the fidelity of the Church herein, than the civilians can be assured of the faithfulness of their predecessors, in preserving and delivering the books of their law to them ; because these holy books were always kept with a greater care, than any other books whatsoever ; and in the acceptance of them also, we find there was great caution used, that they might not be deceived ; all Christians looking upon them to be of such importance, that all religion, they thought, was concerned in them.

Of which this is an argument, that they who sought to destroy the Christian religion, in the primitive times, sought nothing more than to destroy the Bible. Which they were wont to demand, of those who were suspected to be Christians, to be delivered up to them ; that they might burn it. And according as men behaved themselves in this trial, so they were reputed to be Christians, or not Christians. And the Traditors, as they were called, that is, they who delivered the holy Scriptures into the hands of the Pagans, were looked upon by Christians, as men that were content to part with their religion. For which there could be no reason, but that they thought Christian religion to be therein contained, and to be betrayed by those who delivered them to be burnt.

By which, I have proved more than I intended, in this part of my discourse ; that in the holy Scriptures, the whole will of God concerning our salvation, is contained. Which is the true question between us and the Church of Rome : not whether the Scriptures be delivered to us as the Word of God, or no (in this our people ought to tell them we are all agreed), but whether they have been delivered as the whole will of God. And from that argument now mentioned, and many more, we conclude, that universal tradition having directed us unto these books and no other, they direct us sufficiently, without any other doctrines, unto God, and to our everlasting rest.

And if they urge you further, and say, that the very credit of the Scripture depends upon tradition ; tell them that it is a speech not to be endured, if they mean thereby that it gives the Scripture its authority (and if they mean less, we are agreed, as hath been already said), for it is to say, that man

gives authority to God's word. Whereas in truth, the holy Scriptures are not therefore of divine authority, because the Church hath delivered them so to be; but the Church hath delivered them so to be, because it knew them to be of such authority. And if the Church should have conceived, or taught otherwise, of these writings, than as of the undoubted oracles of God, she would have erred damnably in such a tradition.

I shall sum up what hath been said in this second particular, in a few words. Christ and his Apostles at first taught the Church by word of mouth; but afterward that which they preached was, by the commandment of God, committed to writing, and delivered unto the Church, to be the ground of our faith. Which is no more than Irenæus hath said in express words (L. iii. C. 1.), speaking of them by whom the Gospel came into all nations; "which they then preached, but afterward, by the will of God, delivered unto us in the Scriptures; to be, in time to come, the foundation and pillar of our faith."

3. And farther, we likewise acknowledge, that the sum and substance of the Christian religion, contained in the Scriptures, hath been delivered down to us, even from the Apostles' days, in other ways or forms, besides the Scriptures. For instance, in the Baptismal vow; in the Creed; in the Prayers, and Hymns of the Church. Which we may call Traditions, if we please: but they bring down to us no new doctrine, but only deliver, in an abridgment, the same Christianity which we find in the Scriptures.

Upon this there is no need that I should enlarge; but I proceed farther to affirm,

4. That we reverently receive also the unanimous tradition or doctrine of the Church in all ages, which determines the meaning of the holy Scripture; and makes it more clear and unquestionable in any point of faith, wherein we can find it hath declared its sense. For we look upon this tradition as nothing else but the Scripture unfolded; not a new thing, which is not in the Scripture, but the Scripture explained and made more evident.

And thus some part of the Nicene Creed may be called a Tradition; as it hath expressly delivered unto us the sense of the Church of God, concerning that great article of our faith; that Jesus Christ is "the Son of God." Which they teach us was always thus understood; the Son of God, "begotten

of his Father before all worlds, and of the same substance with the Father."

But this tradition supposes the Scripture for its ground; and delivers nothing but what the Fathers, assembled at Nice, believed to be contained there; and was first fetched from thence. For we find in Theodoret (L. i. C. 6.) that the famous Emperor Constantine admonished those Fathers, in all their questions and debates, to consult only with these heavenly inspired writings: "Because the Evangelical and Apostolic books, and the oracles of the old prophets, do evidently instruct us what to think in divine matters." This is so clear a testimony that in those days they made this the complete rule of their faith, whereby they ended controversies (which was the reason, that in several other Synods we find they were wont to lay the Bible before them), and that there is nothing in the Nicene Creed but what is to be found in the Bible; that Cardinal Bellarmine hath nothing to reply to it, but this: "Constantine was, indeed, a great Emperor, but no great doctor." Which is rather a scoff than an answer; and casts a scorn not only upon them, but upon that great Council, who, as the same Theodoret witnesseth, assented unto that speech of Constantine. So it there follows in these words, "the most of the Synod were obedient to what he had discoursed, and embraced both mutual concord and sound doctrine."

And accordingly St. Hilary, a little after, extols his son Constantius for this, that he adhered to the Scriptures; and blames him only for not attending to the true catholic sense of them. His words are these (in his little book, which he delivered to Constantius), "I truly admire thee, O Lord Constantius the Emperor, who desirest a faith according to what is written." They pretended to no other in those days; but (as he speaks a little after), looked upon him that refused this, as Antichrist. It was only required that they should receive their faith out of God's books, not merely according to the words of them, but according to their true meaning (because many "spake Scripture without Scripture, and pretended to faith without faith," as his words are), and herein catholic and constant tradition was to guide them. For whatsoever was contrary to what the whole Church had received and held from the beginning, could not in reason be thought to be the meaning of that Scripture, which was alleged to prove it. And, on the other side, the Church pretended to

no more than to be a witness of the received sense of the Scriptures ; which were the bottom upon which they built this faith.

Thus I observe, Hegesippus saith (in Eusebius' History, L. iv. C. 22), that when he was at Rome he met with a great many bishops, and that he received the very same doctrine from them all. And then, a little after, tells us what that was, and whence they derived it, saying, "that in every succession of bishops, and in every city, so they held ; as the law preached, and as the prophets, and as the Lord." That is, according to the doctrine of the Old and New Testament.

I shall conclude this particular, with a pregnant passage, which I remember in a famous divine of our Church (Dr. Jnckson, in his Treatise of the Catholic Church, chap. 22), who writes to this effect :

That tradition, which was of so much use in the primitive Church, was not unwritten traditions or customs, commended or ratified by the supposed infallibility of any visible Church, but did especially consist in the confessions or registers of particular Churches. And the unanimous consent of so many several Churches, as exhibited their confessions to the Nicene Council, out of such forms as had been framed and taught before this controversy arose, about the divinity of Christ ; and that voluntarily and freely (these Churches being not dependent one upon another, nor overruled by any authority over them, nor misled by faction to frame their confessions of faith by imitation, or according to some pattern set them), was a pregnant argument, that this faith wherein they all agreed, had been delivered to them by the Apostles and their followers, and was the true meaning of the holy writings, in this great article ; and evidently proved that Arius did obtrude such interpretations of Scripture as had not been heard of before ; or were but the sense of some private persons in the Church, and not of the generality of believers.

In short, the unanimous consent of so many distinct visible Churches, as exhibited their several confessions, catechisms, or testimonies, of their own or forefathers' faith, unto the Council of Nice, was an argument of the same force and efficacy against Arius and his partakers, as the general consent and practice of all nations, in worshipping a Divine Power in all ages, is against Atheists. Nothing but the ingrafted notion of a Deity could have induced so many several nations, so much different in natural disposition, in civil discipline and

education, to affect or practise the duty of adoration. And nothing but the evidence of "the ingrafted word" (as St. James calls the Gospel) delivered by Christ and his Apostles in the holy Scriptures, could have kept so many several Churches, as communicated their confessions unto that Council, in the unity of the same faith.

The like may be said of the rest of the four first General Councils ; whose decrees are a great confirmation of our belief ; because they deliver to us the consent of the Churches of Christ, in those great truths which they assert out of the holy Scriptures.

And could there any traditive interpretation of the whole Scripture be produced, upon the authority of such original tradition as that now named, we would most thankfully and joyfully receive it. But there never was any such pretended ; no, not by the Roman Church ; whose doctors differ among themselves, about the meaning of hundreds of places in the Bible. Which they would not do sure, nor spend their time unprofitably in making the best conjectures they are able, if they knew of any exposition of those places, in which all Christian doctors had agreed from the beginning.

5. But more than this, we allow that Tradition gives us a considerable assistance, in such points as are not in so many letters and syllables contained in the Scriptures, but may be gathered from thence, by good and manifest reasoning. Or, in plainer words, perhaps, whatsoever tradition justifies any doctrine, that may be proved by the Scriptures, though not found in express terms there, we acknowledge to be of great use, and readily receive and follow it ; as serving very much to establish us more firmly in that truth, when we see all Christians have adhered to it.

This may be called a confirming tradition, of which we have an instance in the doctrine of infant baptism, which some ancient Fathers call an Apostolic tradition. Not that it cannot be proved by any place of Scripture ; no such matter : for though we do not find it written in so many words, that infants are to be baptized, or that the Apostles baptized infants ; yet it may be proved out of the Scriptures, and the Fathers themselves, who call it an Apostolic tradition, do allege testimonies of the Scriptures to make it good. And therefore we may be sure, they comprehend the Scriptures within the name of Apostolic tradition ; and believe that this doctrine was gathered out of the Scriptures, though not expressly treated of there.

In like manner we, in this Church, assert the authority of Bishops above Presbyters, by a divine right; as appears by the book of Consecration of Bishops, where the person to be ordained to this office, expresses his belief, "that he is truly called to this ministration, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now this we are persuaded may be plainly enough proved, to any man that is ingenuous and will fairly consider things out of the holy Scriptures without the help of tradition: but we also take in the assistance of this for the conviction of gainsayers; and by the perpetual practice and tradition of the Church from the beginning, confirm our Scripture proofs so strongly, that he seems to us very obstinate, or extremely prejudiced, that yields not to them. And therefore, to make our doctrine in this point the more authentic, our Church hath put both these proofs together, in the preface to the form of giving orders; which begins in these words: "It is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been three orders of ministers in Christ's Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons."

I hope no body among us is so weak as to imagine, when he reads this, that by admitting tradition to be of such use and force as I have mentioned, we yield too much to the Popish cause, which supports itself by this pretence. But if any one shall suggest this to any of our people, let them reply; that it is but the pretence, and only by the name of tradition, that the Romish Church supports itself: for true tradition is as great a proof against Popery as it is for Episcopacy. The very foundation of the Pope's empire (which is, his succession in St. Peter's supremacy) is utterly subverted by this; the constant tradition of the Church being evidently against it. And therefore let us not lose this advantage we have against them, by ignorantly refusing to receive true and constant tradition; which will be so far from leading us into their Church, that it will never suffer us to think of being of it, while it remains so opposite to that which is truly Apostolical.

I conclude this, with the direction which our Church gives to preachers in the Book of Canons, 1571 (in the title *Concionatores*), that "no man shall teach the people anything to be held and believed by them religiously, but what is consentaneous to the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, and what the catholic Fathers and ancient Bishops have gathered out of that very doctrine." This is our rule, whereby we are to guide

ourselves; which was set us on purpose to preserve our preachers from broaching any idle, novel, or Popish doctrines, as appears by the conclusion of that injunction, "Vain and old wives opinions, and heresies, and Popish errors, abhorring from the doctrine and faith of Christ, they shall not teach; nor anything at all whereby the unskilful multitude may be inflamed, either to the study of novelty or to contention."

6. But though nothing may be taught as a piece of religion which hath not the forenamed original, yet I must add that those things which have been universally believed, and not contrary to Scripture, though not written at all there, nor to be proved from thence, we do receive as pious opinions. For instance, the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God our Saviour, which is so likely a thing, and so universally received, that I do not see why we should not look upon it as a genuine Apostolical tradition.

7. I have but one thing more to add, which is, that we allow also the traditions of the Church, about matters of order, rites, and ceremonies. Only we do not take them to be parts of God's worship; and if they be not appointed in the holy Scriptures, we believe they may be altered by the same, or the like authority, with that which ordained them. So our Church hath excellently and fully resolved us, concerning such matters, in the Thirty-fourth Article of religion; where there are three things asserted concerning such traditions as these.

First, "It is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies (they are the very first words of the Article) be in all places, one or utterly alike; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word." But then to prevent all disorders and confusions, that men might make in the Church, by following their own private fancies and humours; the next thing which is decreed is this,

Secondly, That "whosoever through his own private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority; ought to be rebuked openly (that others may fear to do the like), as he that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the authority of the magistrate, and woundeth the consciences of the weak brethren."

Lastly, It is there declared, "that every particular, or national

Church, hath authority to ordain, change and abolish ceremonies or rites of the Church, ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying."

This is sufficient to shew what we believe concerning Traditions, about matters of order and decency.

8. As for what is delivered in matters of doctrine, or order, by any private doctor in the Church, or by any particular Church, it appears by what hath been said, that it cannot be taken to be more than the private opinion of that man, or the particular decree of that Church, and can have no more authority than they have ; that is, cannot oblige all Christians, unless it be contained in the holy Scripture.

Now such are the traditions which the Roman Church would impose upon us ; and impose upon us after a strange fashion, as you shall see in the second part of this Discourse ; unto which I shall proceed presently, when I have left you this brief reflection on what hath been said in this first part.

Our people may hereby be admonished not to suffer themselves to be deceived and abused by words and empty names, without their sense and meaning. Nothing is more common than this, especially in the business of Traditions. About which a great stir is raised ; and it is commonly given out that we refuse all traditions. Than which nothing is more false ; for we refuse none truly so called ; that is, doctrines delivered by Christ, or his Apostles. No, we refuse nothing at all because it is unwritten, but merely because we are not sure it is delivered by that authority to which we ought to submit.

Whatsoever is delivered to us by our Lord and his Apostles, we receive as the very word of God ; which we think is sufficiently declared in the holy Scriptures. But if any can certainly prove, by any authority equal to that which brings the Scriptures to us, that there is anything else delivered by them, we receive that also. The controversy will soon be at an end ; for we are ready to embrace it, when any such thing can be produced.

Nay, we have that reverence for those who succeeded the Apostles, that what they have unanimously delivered to us, as the sense of any doubtful place, we receive it and seek no farther. There is no dispute, whether or no we should entertain it.

To the decrees of the Church also, we submit in matters of decency and order : yea, and acquiesce in its authority, when it determines doubtful opinions.

But we cannot receive that as a doctrine of Christ, which we know is but the tradition of man ; nor keep the ordinances of the ancient Church in matters of decency, so unalterably as never to vary from them ; because they themselves did not intend them to be of everlasting obligation. As appears by the changes that have been made in several times and places ; even in some things which are mentioned in the holy Scriptures ; being but customs suited to those ages and countries.

In short, Traditions we do receive ; but not all that are called by that name. Those which have sufficient authority ; but not those which are imposed upon us by the sole authority of one particular Church, assuming a power over all the rest. And so I come to the second part.

PART II.

WHAT TRADITIONS WE DO NOT RECEIVE.

I. And in the first place, we do not believe that there is any tradition, which contains another word of God ; which is not in the Scripture, or cannot be proved from thence. In this consists the main difference between us, and them of the Romish persuasion ; who affirm that Divine truth, which we are all bound to receive, to be partly written, partly delivered by word of mouth without writing. Which is not only the affirmation of the Council of Trent, but delivered in more express terms, in the preface to the Roman Catechism, drawn up by their order ; where we find these words (towards the conclusion of it) “the whole doctrine to be delivered to the faithful, is contained in the word of God ; which (word of God) is distributed into Scripture and tradition.”

This is a full and plain declaration of their mind ; with which we can by no means agree, for divers unanswerable reasons.

1. Not only because the Scriptures testify to their own perfection ; which they affirm to be so great, as to be able to complete the divinest men in the Church of Christ, in all parts of heavenly wisdom, 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17. But

Secondly, Because the constant tradition of the Church (even of the Roman Church anciently) is, that in the Scriptures we may find all that is necessary to be known and believed to salvation. I must not fill up this paper with authorities to this

purpose ; but we avow this unto the people of our Church, for a certain truth, which hath been demonstrated by many of our writers ; who have shewn, that the ancient doctors universally speak the language of St. Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 6, "not to think above that which is written." I will mention only these memorable words of Tertullian, who is as earnest an advocate as any for ritual traditions, but having to deal with Hermogenes in a question of faith, "whether all things in the beginning, were made of nothing?" urges him in this manner : "I have nowhere yet read that all things were made out of a subject matter. If it be written, let those of Hermogenes's shop shew it : if it be not written, let them fear that woe which is allotted to such as add or take away." The very same answer should our people make to those that would have them receive anything as an article of faith, which is not delivered to them by this truly Apostolical Church, wherein we live : If it be written, let us see it ; if it be not, take heed how you add to the undoubted word of God. We receive the holy Scriptures, as able to make us wise to salvation. So they themselves tell us ; and so runs the true tradition of the Church, which you of the Romish persuasion have forsaken ; but we adhere unto.

3. And we have this farther reason so to do, because if part of God's word had been written, and part unwritten, we cannot but believe there would have been some care taken in the written word, not only to let us know so much, but also inform us whither we should resort to find it, and how we should know it ; if it be absolutely necessary for us to be acquainted with it. But there is no such notice, nor any such directions left us ; nor can any man give us any certain rule to follow in this matter, but only this : To examine all traditions by the Scripture, as the supreme rule of faith ; and to admit only such as are conformable thereunto.

4. For which we have still this farther reason, that no sooner were they that first delivered and received the holy Scriptures gone out of the world, but we find men began to add their own fancies unto the catholic truth ; which made it absolutely necessary to keep to the tradition in the holy Scriptures ; all other growing uncertain. This is observed by Hegesippus himself (in Eusebius, L. iii. C. 32,) that "the Church remained a chaste virgin, and the spouse of Christ, till the sacred choir of the Apostles, and the next generation of them, who had had the honour to be their auditors, were extinct : and then there began a plain conspiracy of impious, atheistical error ; by the

fraud of teachers, who delivered other doctrine." Which was a thing St. Paul feared even in his own life-time, about the Church of Corinth (2 Cor. xi. 3.), lest the Devil, like a wily serpent, should beguile them, and corrupt their minds from the original simplicity of the Christian doctrine wherein they were first instructed. And if it were attempted then, it was less difficult, and therefore more endeavoured afterwards, as shall appear anon by plain history; which tells, how several persons pretended they received this and that from an Apostle. Some of which traditions were presently rejected; others received, and afterwards found to be impostures. Which shews there was so much false dealing in the case, that it was hard for men to know what was truly Apostolical in those days, if it came to them this way only; and therefore impossible to be discerned by us now, at this great distance of time from the Apostles, who we know delivered the true faith: but we have no reason to rely upon mere tradition, without Scripture, for any part of that faith, when we see what cheats were put upon men by that means, even then, when they had better helps to detect them than we have.

It is true, the Fathers sometimes urge tradition as a proof of what they say. But we must know that the Scriptures were not presently communicated, among some barbarous nations; and there were some heretics also, who either denied the Scriptures, or some part of them: and in these cases it was necessary to appeal to the tradition that was in the Church; and to convince them by the doctrine taught everywhere by all the bishops. But that (mark this, I pray you) of which they convinced them by this argument, was nothing but what is taught in the Scripture.

5. With which we cannot suffer anything to be equalled in authority; unless we could see it confirmed by the same or equal testimony. This is the great reason of all, why we cannot admit any unwritten traditions to be a part of the word of God, which we are bound to believe; because we cannot find any truths so delivered to us, as those in the holy Scriptures. They come to us with as full a testimony as can be desired, of their Divine original: but so do none of those things, which are now obtruded on us by the Romish Church, under the name of traditions or unwritten word of God.

For the primitive Church had the very first copies, and authentic writings of those books, called the New Testament, delivered by the Apostles' own hands to them. And those

books confirm the Scriptures of the Old Testament ; and they were both delivered to posterity by that primitive Church, witnessing from whom they received them, who carefully kept them as the most precious treasure ; so that this written word hath had the general approbation and testimony of the whole Church of Christ in every age, until this day ; witnessing that it is divine. And it hath been the constant business of the doctors of the Church, to expound this word of God to the people ; and their books are full of citations out of the Scripture ; all agreeing in substance, with what we now read in them. Nay, the very enemies of Christianity, such as Celsus, Porphyry, Julian, never questioned but these are the writings of which the Apostles were the authors, and which they delivered. Besides, the marks they have in themselves of a Divine Spirit, which indited them ; they all tending to breed and preserve in men a sense of God, and to make them truly virtuous.

Not one word of which can be said for any of those unwritten traditions, which the Roman Church pretend to be a part of God's Word. For we have no testimony of them in the holy Scriptures. Nor doth the primitive Church affirm she received them from the Apostles, as she did the written word. Nor have they the perpetual consent, and general approbation of the whole Church ever since. Nor are they frequently quoted, as the words of Scripture are, upon all occasions, by the doctors of the Church. Nor do we find them to be the doctrine which was constantly taught the people. Nor is there any notice taken of them by the enemies of our faith ; whose assaults are all against the Scriptures. In short, they are so far from having any true authority, that counterfeit testimonies, and forged writings, have been their great supporters. Besides the plain drift of them, which is not to make all men better, but to make some richer ; and the manifest danger men are in, by many of them, to be drawn away from God, to put their trust and confidence in creatures ; as might be shewn, if this paper would contain it, in their doctrines of papal supremacy, purgatory, invocation of saints, image worship, and divers others.

Concerning which we say, as St. Cyprian doth to Pompeius, about another matter : " If it be commanded in the Gospels, or in the Epistles of the Apostles, or in their Acts, that they should not be baptized who return from any heresy, but only be received by imposition of hands, LET THIS DIVINE AND HOLY TRADITION BE OBSERVED." The same say we : if

there be any thing in the Gospels, in the Epistles, in the Acts, concerning invocation of saints, concerning, the praying souls out of purgatory, &c. let that divine, that holy tradition be observed. But if it be not there, “what obstinacy is this (as it follows a little after in that Epistle lxxiv.) what presumption, to prefer human tradition, before the divine disposition or ordinance?”

A great deal more there is in that place, and in others of that holy martyr, to bring all to the “source, the root, the original of the divine tradition ; for then human error ceases ;” which original tradition he affirms to be what is delivered in the holy Scriptures ; which delivering to us the whole will of God concerning us, we look after no other tradition, but what explains and confirms and is consonant to this. For we believe, that what is delivered to us by the Scriptures, and what is delivered by true tradition, are but two several ways of bringing us acquainted with the same Christian truth ; not with different parts of that truth.

And so I have done with the first thing ; the sum of which is this. We do not receive any tradition, or doctrine, to supply the defect of the Scripture, in some necessary article of faith ; which doctrines, they of Rome pretend to have one and the same author with the Scripture, *viz.* God ; and therefore, to be received with the same pious affection and reverence : but cannot tell us where we may find them, how we shall discern true from false, nor give us any assurance of their truth, but we must take them purely upon their word.

Now how little reason we have to trust to that, will appear in the second thing I have to add ; which is this,

II. That we dare not receive any thing whatsoever, merely upon the credit of the Roman Church ; no, not that divine, that holy tradition before spoken of, *viz.* the Scripture. Which we do not believe only upon their testimony ; both because they are but a part of the Church, and therefore not the sole keepers of Divine truth ; and they are a corrupted part, who have not approved themselves faithful in the keeping what was committed to them.

Let our people diligently mark this, that traditions never were, nor are now, only in the keeping of the Roman Church ; and that these things are widely different, the tradition of the whole Church, or of the greatest and best part of it ; and the tradition of one part of the Church, and the least part of it ; and the worst part also and most depraved.

What is warranted by the authority of the whole Church, I have shewn before, we reverently receive ; but we cannot take that for current tradition, which is warranted only by a small part of the Church, and we give very little credit to what is warranted only by that part of it which is Roman. Because,

1. First, This Church hath not preserved so carefully as other Churches have done, the first and original tradition, which is in the Scriptures ; but suffered them to be shamefully corrupted. Every one knows that there is a Latin vulgar edition of the Bible (which they of that Church prefer before the original), none of which they preserved heretofore from manifest depravations ; nor have been able, since they were told of the faults, to purge away ; so as to canonize any edition, without permitting great numbers in their newest and most approved Bibles. Isidore Clarius, in his preface to his edition, complains that he found these holy writings defaced with innumerable errors : eight thousand of which, that he thought most material, he saith, he amended ; and yet left he knew not how many lesser ones untouched : after which (the Council of Trent having vouched this vulgar Latin Edition, for the only authentic) Pope Sixtus V. published, out of the several copies that were abroad, one, which he straitly charged to be received, as the only true vulgar ; from which none should dare to vary in a tittle. And yet two years were scarce passed, before Clement VIII. found many defects and corruptions still remaining in that edition ; and therefore published another, with the very same charge, that none else should be received.

Which evidently shews, they have suffered the holy books to be so foully abused, that they know not how to amend the errors that are crept into them ; nor can tell which is the true Bible. For these two Bibles thus equally authorized, as the only authentic ones, abound not only with manifest diversities, but with contradictions, or contrarieties, one to the other. Whereby all Romanists are reduced to this miserable necessity, either to make use of no Bible at all ; or to fall under the curse of Sixtus, if he make use of that of Clement ; or the curse of Clement, if he use the Bible of Sixtus. For they are both of them enjoined, with the exclusion of all other editions ; and with the penakty of a curse upon them, who disobey the one or the other ; and it is impossible to obey both.

This might be sufficient to demonstrate, how unfaithful that

Church hath been, in the weightiest concerns. Whereby all the members of it are plunged, beyond all power of redemption, into a dismal necessity, either of laying aside the Scriptures, or of offending against the sacred decrees (as [they account them) of one or other of the heads of their Church (which some take to be infallible), and being accursed of them.

2. But for every one's fuller satisfaction, it may be fit farther to represent, how negligent they have been in preserving other traditions, which were certainly once in the Church, but now utterly lost. There is no question to be made, but the Apostles taught the first Christians, the meaning of those hard places which we find in their and other holy writings. But who can tell us where to find certainly, so much as one of them? And therefore, where is the fidelity of this Church, which boasts so much to be the keeper of sacred traditions? For nothing is more desirable than those Apostolical interpretations of Scripture; nothing could be more useful; and yet we have no hope to meet with them either there, or indeed any where else. Which is no reproach to other Churches, who do not pretend to more than is written; but reflects much upon them, and discredits them, who challenge the power of the whole Church entirely, and would pass not only for the sole keepers and witnesses of Divine truth, but for careful preservers of it. For of what should they have been more careful, than of these useful things; whereof they can tell us nothing? When of unprofitable ceremonies they have most devoutly kept, if we could believe them, a very great number.

3. They tell us indeed of some doctrinal traditions also, which they have religiously preserved; but mark I beseech you, with what sincerity. For to justify these, they have forged great numbers of writings, and books under the name of such authors, as it is evident had no hand in them; which is another reason why we cannot give credit to their reports, if we have no other authority. There are very few persons now that are ignorant how many Decretal Epistles of the ancient Bishops of Rome have been devised, to establish the Papal empire; and how shamefully a donation of Constantine hath been pretended, wherein he gave away the Roman empire, and all its rights to the Pope. Which puts me in mind (as a notorious proof of this) of the forgeries that are in the Breviary itself; where we read of Constantine's leprosy, and the cure of it by Sylvester's baptizing him (which are egregious fables),

and of the decrees of the second Roman Synod under that Pope Sylvester, wherein the Breviary affirms Photinus was condemned ; when all the world knows that Photinus's heresy did not spring up till divers years after the death of Sylvester. And there are so many other arguments which prove the decrees of that Synod to be a vile forgery, that we may see, by the way, what reason they have to keep their liturgy in an unknown language ; lest the people perceiving what untruths they are taught, instead of God's word, should abhor that Divine service, as justly they might, which is stuffed with so many fables.

It would be endless to shew how many passages they have foisted into ancient writers to countenance their traditions, particularly about the Papal supremacy ; by which so great a man as Thomas Aquinas was deceived, who frequently quotes authorities which are mere forgeries ; though not invented by him, I verily think, but imposed upon him by the fraud which had been long practised in that Church. For we find, that the canons of so famous and universally known Council, as that of the first at Nice, have been falsely alleged even by Popes themselves. Boniface, for instance, and Zosimus, alleged a counterfeit Nicene canon to the African bishops in the sixth Council of Carthage ; who, to convince the false dealing of these Popes, sought out with great labour and diligence the ancient and authentic copies of the Nicene canons ; and having obtained them both from Alexandria and from Constantinople, they found them for number and for sense to be the very same, which themselves already had ; but not one word in them of what the Popes pretended. The same I might say of Pope Innocent, and others ; whom I purposely omit, because I study brevity.

4. And have this farther to add, that as they have pretended tradition where there is none, so where there is they have left that tradition : and therefore, have no reason to expect that we should be governed by them in this matter ; who take the liberty to neglect, as they please, better tradition than they would impose upon us. None are to be charged with this, if it be a guilt, more than themselves. For instance, the three immersions, *i. e.* dipping the persons three times in baptism, was certainly an ancient practice ; and said by many authors to be an Apostolical tradition ; and to be ordained in signification of the blessed Trinity, into whose name they were baptized. And yet there is no such thing now in use, in their

Church, no more than in ours; who justify ourselves, as I shewed above, by a true opinion, that rites and ceremonies are not unalterable; which it is impossible for them to do, unless they will cease to press the necessity of other traditions upon us, which never were so generally received, as this which is now abolished. To which may be added, the custom of giving the eucharist to infants, which prevailed for several ages, and is called by St. Austin an Apostolical tradition: the custom of administering baptism only at Easter and Whitsuntide; with a great heap more, which it would be too long to enumerate. Nor is it necessary I should trouble the reader with them; these being sufficient to shew the partiality of that Church in this matter; and that we have no reason to be tied to that, merely upon their authority; which they will not observe, though having a far greater. Nay, all discreet persons may easily see, what a wide difference there is, between them who have abrogated such traditions, as had long gone even in their Church, under the name of Apostolical; and us, who therefore do not follow pretended traditions now, because we believe them not to be Apostolical, but merely Roman. He is strangely blind, who doth not see how much more sincere this Church is than that, in this regard.

Besides this, we can demonstrate, that as in these things they have forsaken traditions, so in other cases they have perverted and abused them; turning them into quite another thing. As appears to all that understand anything of ancient learning, in the business of purgatory; which none of the most ancient writers so much as dreamt to be such a place, as they have now devised: but only asserted a purgatory fire, through which all, both good and bad, even the blessed Virgin herself, must pass, at the great and dreadful day of judgment. This was the old tradition, as we may call it, which was among Christians; which they have changed into such a tradition as was among the Pagans.

6. But it is time to have done with this; else I should have insisted upon this a while, which I touched before, and is of great moment: that the tradition which now runs in that Church, is contrary to the certain tradition of the Apostles and the universal Church; particularly in the canon of Scripture. In which no more books have been numbered by the catholic Church in all ages, since the Apostles' time, than are in the sixth Article of religion in this Church of England; till the late Council of Trent took the boldness to thrust the

Apocryphal books into the holy canon ; as nothing inferior to the acknowledged Divine writings. This hath been so evidently demonstrated by a late reverend prelate of our Church, in his "Scholastical History of the Canon of the Scriptures," out of undoubted records, that no fair answer can be made to it.

But I must leave a little room for other things that ought to be noted.

III. And the next is a consequence from what hath been now said : that there being so little credit to be given to the Roman Church only, we cannot receive those doctrines for truth, which that Church now presses upon our belief, upon the account of tradition. For instance, that "the Church of Rome, is the mother and mistress of all other Churches ;" that "the Pope of Rome is the monarch or head of the universal visible Church ;" that "all Scriptures must be expounded according to the sense of this Church ;" that "there are truly and properly seven sacraments, neither more nor less, instituted by our blessed Lord himself in the New Testament ;" that "that there is a proper and propitiatory sacrifice offered in the mass for the quick and dead, the same that Christ offered on the cross ;" in short, the half communion, and all the rest of the articles of their new faith, in the Creed published by Pope Pius IV. which are traditions of the Roman Church alone, not of the universal ; and rely solely upon their own authority. And therefore we refuse them, and in our disputes about traditions, we mean these things ; which we reject because they have no foundation, either in the holy Scripture or in universal tradition ; but depend, as I said, upon the sole authority of that Church, which witnesses in its own behalf.

For whatsoever is pretended, to make the better show, all resolves at last into that ; as I intimated in the beginning of this discourse. Scripture and tradition can do nothing at all for them ; without their Church's definition. Though their whole infallible rule of faith seem to be made up of those three, yet in truth, the last of these alone, the Church's definition, is the whole rule ; and the very bottom upon which their faith stands. For what is tradition, is no more apparent than what is Scripture, according to their principles, without the authority of their Church ; which pretends to an unlimited power to supply the defect even of tradition itself.

In short, as tradition among them is taken in to supply the defect of Scripture ; so the authority of their Church is taken in to supply the defect of tradition ; but this authority undermines them both ; because neither Scripture nor tradition signify any thing, without their Church's authority. Which therefore is the rule of their faith ; that is, they believe themselves.

To which absurdity they are driven, because it is made evident by us, that there have been great diversities of traditions, and many changes and alterations made, even in things called apostolical, &c. and therefore they have no other way, but to fly to the judgment of the present Roman Church, to determine what are traditions apostolical, and what are not ; by which judgment all mankind must be governed ; that is, we must believe them ; and they believe themselves ; which they would have done well to have said in one word, without putting us to the trouble of seeking for traditions in books, and in other Churches. But they would willingly colour their pretences, by as many fair words as possible, and so make mention of Scripture, tradition, antiquity : which when we have examined, they will not stand to them ; but take sanctuary in their own authority : saying, they are the sole judges what is Scripture, and what tradition, and what antiquity ; nay, have a power to declare any new point of faith, which the Church never heard of before. This is the doctrine of Salmeron and others of his fellows ; that "the doctrine of faith admits of additions in essential things. For all things were not taught by the Apostles, but such as were then necessary and fit for the salvation of believers."

By which means we can never know when the Christian religion will be perfected ; but their Church may bring in traditions by its sole authority, without end.

Nay, some among them have been contented to resolve all their faith into the sole authority of the present Roman bishop ; according to that famous saying of Cornelius Mussus (promoted by Paul III. to a bishopric) upon the fourteenth chapter to the Romans : "to confess the truth ingenuously, I would give greater credit to one Pope in those things which touch the mysteries of faith, than to a thousand Jerome's, Austin's, Gregory's : to say nothing of Richard's, Scotus's, &c. for I believe and know, that the Pope cannot err in matters of faith." Which contemptuous speech he would never have uttered, to the discredit of those great men whom they pre-

tend to reverence, if he had not known more certainly, that the tradition which runs among the ancient Fathers is against them, than he could know the Pope to be infallible.

There is no tradition, I am sure, for that ; nor for abundance of other things, which rest merely upon their own credit, as is fairly acknowledged in two great articles of their present Creed, by our countryman Bishop Fisher, with whose words I conclude this particular. "Many, perhaps, have the less confidence in indulgences, because their use seems to have been newer in the Church, and very lately found among Christians. To whom I answer, that it doth not appear certain by whom they began to be first delivered. For the ancients make no mention, or very rare, of purgatory ; and the Greeks to this very day do not believe it ; nor was the belief either of purgatory or of indulgences, so necessary in the primitive Church, as it is now. And as long as there was no care about purgatory, nobody sought for indulgences ; for all their esteem depends upon that. If you take away purgatory, to what purpose are indulgences ? Since therefore purgatory was so lately known and received in the catholic Church, who can wonder that there was no use of indulgences in the beginning of our religion ?"

Which is a full confession what kind of traditions that Church commends unto us ; things lately invented, their own private opinions, of which the ancient Christians knew nothing. In one word, their tradition is no tradition ; in that sense wherein the Church always understood it.

IV. And what hath been said of them must be applied to other particular Churches ; though some have been more sincere than they. None of them hath any authority to commend any thing as an article of faith unto posterity ; which hath not been commended to them by all foregoing ages, derived from the Apostles. For Vincentius's rule is to guide us all in this, "that is Catholic (and consequently to be received) which hath been held by all, and in all Churches, and at all times."

V. Which puts me in mind of another thing to be briefly touched ; that the ecclesiastical tradition contained in the confessions or registers of particular Churches, in these days wherein we live, is not received by us, nor allowed to have the same authority which such tradition had at the time of the Nicene Council, for the conviction of heresy. The joint consent, I mean, of so many bishops as were there assembled,

and the unanimous confessions of so many several Churches of several provinces as were there delivered, hath not now such a force to induce belief, as it had then. The reason of which is given by the same Vincentius, who so highly commends that way which was then taken, of reproving heresy: but adds this most wise caution (in the last chapter but one of the first part of his *Commonitorium*), "But you must not think that all heresies, and always, are thus to be opposed; but only new and fresh heresies: when they first rise up, that is, before they have falsified the rules of the ancient faith, &c. As for inveterate heresies, which have spread themselves, they are in no wise to be assaulted this way; because in a long tract of time, many opportunities may have presented themselves to heretics, of stealing truth out of ancient records, and of corrupting the volumes of our ancestors."

Which if it be applied to the present state of things, it is evident the Roman Church hath had such opportunities of falsifying antiquity ever since the first acknowledgment of the Papal supremacy, that we cannot rely merely upon any written testimonies, or unwritten traditions, which never so great a number of their bishops met together shall produce: which amount not to so much as one legal testimony; but they are to be looked upon, or suspected, as a multitude of false witnesses, conspiring together in their own cause.

How then, may some say, can heresies of long standing be confuted? The same Vincentius resolves us in this, in the very next words, "We may convince them, if need be, by the sole authority of the Scriptures; or eschew them as already convicted and condemned in ancient times, by the General Councils of catholic priests."

The tradition which is found there, must direct all future Councils, not the opinions of their own present Churches.

VI. I will add but one thing more; which is, that the Tradition called oral, because it comes by word of mouth from one age to another, without any written record, is the most uncertain, and can be least relied upon, of all other. This hath been demonstrated so fully by the writers of our Church, and there are such pregnant instances of the errors into which men have been led by it, that it needs no long discourse.

Two instances of it are very common, and I shall add a third.

1. The first is that which Papias, who lived presently after

the Apostles' times, and conversed with those who had seen them, set on foot. His way was, as Eusebius relates out of his works, not so much to read, as to inquire of the elders, what St. Andrew or St. Peter said; what was the saying of St. Thomas, St. James, and the rest of the disciples of our Lord. And he pretended, that some of them told him, among other things, that after the resurrection of our bodies, we shall reign a thousand years here upon earth: which he gathered, saith Eusebius, from some saying of the Apostles wrong understood. But this fancy was embraced very greedily, and was taught for two whole ages, as an Apostolical tradition; nobody opposing it, and yet having nothing to say for it, but only "the antiquity of the man" (as Eusebius' words are, L. iii. cap. ult.) who delivered it to them: yet this tradition hath been generally since taken for an imposture; and teaches us no more than this, that if one man could set a-going such a doctrine, and make it pass so current for so long a time, upon no other pretence, than that an Apostle said so in private discourse, we have great reason to think that other traditions have had no better beginning, or not so good; especially since they never so universally prevailed as that did.

2. A second instance is that famous contention about the observation of Easter; which miserably afflicted the Church in the days of Victor bishop of Rome, by dividing the Eastern Christians from the Western. One pretending tradition from St. John and St. Philip; the other from St. Peter and St. Paul. Concerning which I will not say, as Rigaltius doth (in his sharp note upon the words of Firmilian, who pretended tradition for the rebaptizing of heretics), that "under the names and persons of great men, there were sottish and sophistical things delivered for Apostolical traditions, by fools and sophisters." But this I affirm, that there are many more instances of men's forwardness, and they neither fools nor sophisters, but only wedded to the opinions of their own Churches, to obtrude things as Apostolical, for which they had no proof at all. For when they knew not how to defend themselves, presently they flew to tradition Apostolical.

3. A third instance of whose uncertainty we have in Irenæus (L. ii. c. 39), concerning the age of our blessed Saviour when he died; which he confidently affirms to have been forty, if not fifty years; and saith, the elders which knew St. John, and were his scholars, received this relation from

him. And yet all agree, that he beginning to preach at thirty years of age, was crucified about three years and an half after.

The like relation Clemens makes, of his preaching but one year; which he calls a secret tradition from the Apostles, but hath no more truth in it, than the other.

Now if in the first ages, when they were so near the fountain and beginning of tradition, men were deceived, nay, such great men as these were deceived, and led others into errors in these matters; we cannot, with any safety, trust to traditions, that have passed, men pretend, from one to another until now: but which we can find no mention of in any writer, till some ages after the Apostles; and then were by somebody or other, who had authority in those days, called Apostolical traditions: merely to gain them the more credit. Thus Andreas Cæsariensis, in his Commentaries upon the Book of Revelation, p. 743, saith, That the coming of Enoch and Elias, before the second coming of Christ (though it be not found in Scripture), was a constant report received by "tradition without any variation," from the teachers of the Church.

Which is sufficient to shew, how ready they were to father their own private opinions upon ancient universal tradition; and how little reason we have to trust to that, which was so uncertain, even in the first ages; and therefore must needs be more dubious now.

Thus I have endeavoured to lay before the eyes of those who will be pleased to look over this short treatise, what they are to think and speak about tradition. It is a calumny to affirm that the Church of England rejects all tradition; and I hope, none of her true children are so ignorant, as when they hear that word, to imagine they must rise up and oppose it. No, the Scripture itself is a tradition; and we admit all other traditions which are subordinate and agreeable unto that; together with all those things which can be proved to be Apostolical, by the general testimony of the Church in all ages: nay, if any thing not contained in Scripture, which the Roman Church now pretends to be a part of God's word, were delivered to us by a universal uncontrolled tradition as the Scripture is, we should receive it as we do the Scripture.

But it appears plainly, that such things were at first but private opinions; which now are become the doctrines of that particular Church, who would impose her decrees upon us, under the venerable name of Apostolical universal tradition; which I have shewn you hath been an ancient cheat, and that

we ought not to be so easy as to be deceived it. But to be very wary, and afraid of trusting the traditions of such a Church, as hath not only perverted some, abolished others, and pretended them where there hath been none; but been a very unfaithful preserver of them, and that in matters of great moment, where there were some: and lastly, warrants those which it pretends to have kept, by nothing but its own infallibility. For which there is no tradition, but much against it; even in the original tradition, the holy Scriptures, which plainly suppose the Roman Church may not only err, but utterly fail and be cut off from the body of Christ: as they that please may read, who will consult the eleventh chapter to the Romans, ver. 20, 21, 22. Of which they are in the greater danger, because they proudly claim so high a prerogative as that now mentioned; directly contrary to the Apostolical admonition in that place: "Be not high-minded, but fear."

CONCLUSION.

I SHALL end this discourse with a brief admonition, relating to our Christian practice.

And what is there more proper or more seasonable than this? While we reject all spurious traditions, let us be sure to keep close to the genuine and true. Let us hold them fast, and not let them go.

Let us not dispute ourselves out of all religion, while we condemn that which is false: nor break all Christian discipline and order, because we cannot submit to all human impositions.

In plain words, let us not throw off Episcopacy, together with the Papal tyranny.

We ought to be the more careful in observing the Divine tradition delivered to us in the Scripture, and according to the Scripture; because we are not bound to other.

While we contend against the *half* communion, let us make a conscience to receive the *whole* frequently. It looks like faction, rather than religion, to be earnest for that which we mean not to use.

In like manner, while we look upon additions to the Scripture as vain, let us not neglect to read and ponder those holy writings.

When we reject purgatory as a fable, let us really dread hell-fire.

And while we do not tie ourselves to all usages that have been in the Church, let us be careful to observe, first, all the substantial duties of righteousness, charity, sobriety and godliness, which are unquestionably delivered to us by our Lord himself and his holy Apostles: and secondly, all the ordinances of the Church wherein we live, which are not contrary to the Word of God. For so hath the same Divine authority delivered; that the people should obey those that are their guides and governors; submitting themselves to their authority, and avoiding all contention with them, as most indecent in itself and pernicious to religion; which suffers extremely, when neither ecclesiastical authority nor ecclesiastical custom can end disputes about rites and ceremonies.

Read 1 Thess. v. 12. Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Cor. xi. 16; and read such places, as you ought to do all the other Scriptures, till your hearts be deeply affected with them.

For be admonished, in the last place, of this; which is of general use, and must never be forgotten; because we shall lose the benefit of that celestial doctrine, which is delivered unto us, if we do not strictly observe it: that as this evangelical doctrine is delivered down to us, so we must be delivered up to it. Thus St. Paul teaches us to speak in Rom. vi. 17, where he thanks God, that they who formerly had been servants of sin, did now "obey from the heart that form of doctrine, unto which they were delivered." So the words run in the Greek (as the margin of our Bibles informs you) *εις ὃν παρεδόθητε*.

This is the tradition which we must be sure to retain, and hold fast above all other; as that without which all our belief will be ineffectual.

This is the very end for which all Divine truth is delivered unto us, that we may be delivered, and make a surrender of ourselves unto it.

Observe the force of the Apostle's words; which tell us, first, that there was a certain form of Christian doctrine which the Apostles taught, compared here to a mould (so the word *τύπος*, "form," may be translated) into which metal, or such like matter is cast; that it may receive the figure and shape of that mould.

2. Now he compares the Roman Christians to such ductile, pliable matter ; they being so delivered or cast into this form or mould of Christian doctrine, that they were entirely framed and fashioned according to it ; and had all the linements, as I may say, of it expressed upon their souls.

3. And having so received it, they were obedient to it ; for without this, all the impressions, which by knowledge or faith were made upon their souls, were but an imperfect draft of what was intended in the Christian tradition.

4. And it was hearty obedience, sincere compliance with the Divine will ; such obedience as became those who understood their religion to be a great deliverance and liberty from the slavery of sin (before spoken of) into the happy freedom of the service of God.

5. All which, lastly, he ascribes to the grace of God, which had both delivered to them that doctrine, and drawn them to deliver up themselves to it ; made their hearts soft and ductile to be cast into that mould, and quickened them to Christian obedience ; and given them a willing mind to obey cheerfully. All this was from God's grace, and not their merits ; and, therefore, the thanks was to be ascribed to him, who succeeds and blesses all pious endeavours.

Now, according to this pattern let us frame ourselves ; who, blessed be God, have a form of doctrine delivered to us in this Church, exactly agreeable to the holy Scriptures, which lie open before us ; and we are exhorted not only to look into them, but we feel that grace which hath brought them to us, clearly demonstrating, that we ought to be formed according to the holy doctrine therein delivered, by the delivery of ourselves unto it. By the delivery of our mind, that is, to think of God, and ourselves, and of our duty in every point, just as this instructs us. And by the delivery of our wills and affections, to be governed and regulated according to its directions. And when we have consented to this, we find the Divine grace representing to us the necessity of an hearty obedience, to what we know and believe and have embraced as the very truth of God. To this we are continually drawn and mightily moved ; and if we would shew our thankfulness for it, let us follow these godly motions, and conform ourselves in all things to the heavenly prescriptions of this book ; being confident, that if we do, we need not trouble ourselves about any other model of religion, which we find not here delivered.

For if you desire to know what form of doctrine it is, to

which the Apostle would have us delivered ; it is certain it is a doctrine directly opposite to all vice and wickedness. For herein the grace of God was manifested, he tells the Romans, in that it had brought them from being slaves of sin, heartily to obey the Christian doctrine ; which taught, that is, virtue and piety.

Now to this the present Romanists can pretend to add nothing. All the parts of a godly life are sufficiently taught us in the holy Scriptures. And if we would seriously practise and follow this doctrine, from the very heart, we should easily see there is no other but what is there delivered. For whatsoever is pretended to be necessary besides, is not a doctrine according unto godliness (as the Apostle calls Christianity), but the very design of it is to open an easier way to heaven, than that laid before us in the holy Scriptures ; by masses for the dead, by indulgences, by satisfactions, and the merits of the saints, and several other such like inventions ; which have no foundation in the Scriptures, nor in true antiquity.

That is a word, indeed, which is very much pretended. Antiquity, they say, is on their side ; but it is nothing different from what hath been said about Tradition. And if we will run up to the true antiquity, there is nothing so ancient as the holy Scriptures. They are the oldest records of religion ; and by them if we frame our lives, we are sure it is according to the most authentic and ancient directions of piety, delivered in the holy oracles of God. So both sides confess them to be. And if the old rule be safe, "that is true which is first," we are safe enough ; for there is nothing before this to be our guide ; and there can be nothing after this but must be tried by it. According to another rule, as old as reason itself ; "the first in every kind, is the measure of all the rest." And, as sure as that there is a Gospel of God's grace, "they that walk after this rule (this Divine canon) peace shall be upon them, and mercy ;" they being the true Israel, or Church of God.

THE TEXTS EXAMINED, WHICH PAPISTS CITE OUT OF
THE BIBLE, FOR THE PROOF OF THEIR DOCTRINE
CONCERNING THE INSUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE, AND
NECESSITY OF TRADITION.

AMONGST all the controversies now depending between the Reformed Churches and the Church of Rome, there is none of greater importance than that which concerns the Rule of Faith, where all things necessary to salvation are to be found.

Both agree that there are things thus necessary, and that there is a certain rule by which they are to be determined.

Both agree that the written Word of God is a rule of that kind. So Bellarmine saith, "That in the first place is to be determined, that the prophetical and apostolical books are the true Word of God, and a certain and stable rule of faith."*

Both agree that the evidence for it is unquestionable; for as "a rule of faith ought to be certain and known, so nothing is more certain, nothing more known than the Scriptures,"† saith the same author.

Both agree, that if there were an unwritten word, or that if there was as much certainty of an unwritten word, as there is of the written word, the unwritten would be of as good authority as the written.

But those that thus far agree, do afterward divide upon it beyond any possibility of accommodation.

For the Church of Rome holds,

1. That the written word of God is not complete nor sufficient to direct us in all matters necessary to salvation, which concern faith and manners.

2. That an unwritten word, or tradition, is necessary to make the Scripture an entire, complete, and sufficient rule of faith.

3. That there is an unwritten word, which is as much the Word of God, is of as good authority, and is equally to be received with the like faith, piety and reverence, as the written

* De Verbo l. 1. c. 1. et c. 2. § Quare. [vol. 1. p. 1. col. 1. p. 2. col. 1. Prag. 1721.]

† C. 2. § Deinde et sacris. [Ibid.]

word ; and which with the written makes a complete rule of faith, &c.

These things are all denied by the Protestants : and because they are denied by them, therefore the writers of the Church of Rome have endeavoured to prove each of these by Scripture, as being the only authority their adversaries allow in this case. And these proofs I shall consider and examine.

SECT. 1.—Their first assertion is, that the Scripture doth not contain all things necessary to salvation ; or, is not a rule sufficient to guide us therein.

This Cardinal Bellarmine* undertakes to justify, and prove from Scripture ; but, how faintly, we may judge by what he elsewhere asserts. As,

1. That “the Apostles were wont to preach to all, all those things which are simply necessary.”† And that “all those things which they preached openly to all, and are necessary to all, are written by the Apostles.”

2. That “it is not said in Scripture, that the Scripture is not sufficient in all things necessary, but it may be collected from it.”‡

And because we are not willing to let any thing, that looks like a proof from Scripture, escape a due examination, let us see how they collect it.

1. He argues thus : if Scripture contains all things necessary, and is sufficient, then it is either the single books, or the whole canon : if the whole canon of Scripture be included, that cannot be, because “many books truly sacred and canonical have perished,” § as those of Samuel and Nathan, concerning the acts of David, 1 Chron. xxix. 29 ; of Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo, concerning the acts of Solomon, 2 Chron. ix. 29 ; Solomon’s natural and moral observations, 1 Kings iv. 32, &c. Of the New Testament, he saith, “it is certain, that the Epistle of St. Paul to the Laodiceans, mentioned Colos. iv. 16, is wanting ; and perhaps another to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. v. 9. Now,” saith he, “where are all these ? And, let the heretics see from whence they may make up this defect.”

To this I answer :

1. That every thing wrote by inspired persons was not canonical, or indeed, of Divine inspiration : for, as nothing

* De Verbo l. 4. c. 3. init. c. 4. § Quod autem. [Ibid. p. 101. c. 2. p. 104. c. 1.]

† Ibid. c. 11. § Nota et His Notatis. [Ibid. p. 123. c. 2. p. 124. c. 1.]

‡ C. 10. Sect. Et quamvis. [Ibid. p. 122. c. 1.]

§ Bellarm. ibid. c. 4. Sect. Quod autem, &c. [p. 104. c. 1.]

is canonical but what was inspired, 2 Tim. iii. 16; "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and was therefore inspired and wrote, that it might be canonical: so this inspiration was not a power at all times resident in all those persons, but "they spake," and so certainly wrote, "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost:" 2 Pet. i. 21. And therefore it doth not follow, for example, that because Solomon was an inspired person, that his natural history was of Divine inspiration; or was intended by Almighty God, to be as much a part of the canon as his books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

2. I may add, that therefore the books aforesaid that are not now extant, were not canonical, because they are lost: for if the Divine Providence will secure the books from a general corruption, as Ballarmine* doth argue, for the purity of the Hebrew text; then it will no less secure the books themselves from perishing.

3. If we should grant, that some part of the Scripture is lost; yet it follows not, that what was lost did contain things necessary to salvation, and that what remains is not now a sufficient rule. For the Scripture is an abundant, as well as a sufficient rule, and contains things profitable, as well as necessary: and therefore, unless somewhat necessary to salvation was lost with those books, it is no more to their purpose; than that because there are many other things Jesus did, which are not written, that therefore what is written concerning him is not sufficient.

4. It is still less to their purpose, unless what was once written, but is not now extant in any Divine writings, is yet entirely and purely preserved by tradition. Now where are all these books of Natnan, Solomon, and Ahijah, &c.? Let these traditionary men see from whence they make up this defect. Where are the things necessary to salvation, that were in those books? Or, where are the books themselves that contain those things? But if they cannot do this, of what use is their unwritten word?

And whereas he saith of the New Testament, that "it is certain St. Paul wrote an Epistle to the Laodiceans:"

1. It is rather certainly otherwise; if the words of the text are consulted, Col. iv. 16: "When this Epistle is read amongst you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the Epistle from Laodicea." By

* L. 2. c. 2. Sect. Quintum. [Ibid. p. 41. c. 1.]

which words it is certain it was an Epistle wrote from Laodicea, and not to the Laodiceans; where it is not certain that ever the Apostle was, Col. ii.

2. It is far more probable that it was an Epistle of the Laodiceans to St. Paul, than an Epistle of St. Paul to the Laodiceans (as there was one of the Corinthians to him, 1 Cor. vii. 1), and which this Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians might serve as an answer to.

As for what he infers from 1 Cor. v. 9: "I wrote unto you an Epistle," as if the Apostle had wrote one before this to them, the Cardinal ventures only upon a perhaps: as well knowing that it does not necessarily infer it, and that it may signify either no more than I had written in the Epistle which I now send, that you should not accompany with fornicators; but for fear of mistake, and lest you should carry it too far, I think fit more particularly to explain myself: or, I have written, "Purge out the old leaven," but thereby I mean, &c. So Theophylact, &c.

Thus far they argue in general from Scripture, against the sufficiency of Scripture; but as for particular places, they produce none: Bellarmine saith it is to be collected from other places, such as 1 Cor. xi. "The rest will I set in order when I come:"* and 2 Thess. ii. "Keep the traditions." But these belong to the next head, and there I shall take them into consideration. •

OF TRADITION.

SECT. 2.—Tradition is here taken in a theological sense, for such things relating to faith and manners as are not written, but proceed from, and are of the same authority, and to be received with the same piety and reverence as what is written.

So that the question is, whether there was such a tradition, or unwritten word, delivered by Christ and the Apostles, and continued from time to time in the Church, which contains such things relating to faith and manners, as are of the same authority, and are to be alike received as necessary to salvation as what is written?

As necessary; for if the Scripture doth not contain all things

* L. 4. c. 10. Sect. Et quamvis. [Ibid. p. 122. c. 1.]

necessary to salvation, then those necessities not found in Scripture must be sought for in the tradition of the Church.

And this Bellarmine* undertakes to shew the necessity of, from Scripture.

Arg. 1. His argument is drawn from the state of the Church before the time of Moses, when for the space of 2000 years and upwards, there was no Divine writing, and nothing but tradition, as Gen. xviii. 19. God said of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." And therefore, saith the Cardinal, "Scripture is not simply necessary; and if the ancient religion could be preserved without Scripture for 2000 years, so the Christian doctrine might be preserved without Scripture for 1500 years." But how doth this prove the necessity of tradition, which was the point he undertook to shew?

But in farther reply to this, I answer :

First, that the case is not parallel : for there was, in those times, a greater reason why religion might be preserved by tradition than now.

1. From the long lives of the Patriarchs, when the whole time of 1650 years, from the creation to the flood, was taken up by Adam and Methuselah, and so the tradition of the true religion be the better preserved.

2. As the religion was natural, and few things of mere institution.

3. As within the Church they had often inspired persons, to whom, upon particular emergencies, God revealed himself.

And so it by no means follows, that if tradition was then sufficient, and a written word unnecessary, that it should be so when the circumstances were altered.

2. His argument supposes that which is not true, that tradition is sufficient to preserve the doctrine of religion free from corruption, without a written word. Bellarmine supposes it only possible, and common experience determines against him. For how early do we find it observed, that "all flesh had corrupted his way on the earth," Gen. vi. 12. And as before, so after the flood, they had so manifestly degenerated, that God called Abraham from his father's house, which was infected with idolatry, Gen. xii. 1, and xxxi. 30.

3. The very place he produces doth suppose this : for when

* L. 4. c. 4. [Ibid. p. 103. &c.]

God speaks of the gross corruption of Sodom, he gives this character of Abraham, "I know him," &c. which implies that the degeneracy of the world proceeded much from the insufficiency of the traditionary way.

4. The way God afterwards took for the securing of religion and a Church, doth further prove the infirmity and insufficiency of tradition for it; when even the Decalogue, that short sum of moral precepts, was writ and delivered to Moses, "that he might teach them," Exod. xxiv. 12; and the whole law afterwards was wrote by Moses, Deut. xxxi. 9; which was when there seemed to be less occasion for it, as that people were set by themselves, and to have no communication with other nations; and had an order of men amongst them, whose whole business it was to attend it, and to instruct the people; and that had withal, in all ages, persons extraordinarily inspired.

Arg. 2. His next argument is, that when the Jews had a written word, they used tradition more than Scripture. This he attempts to prove from the following texts. Exod. xiii. 8, "Thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because," &c. Deut. xxxii. 7. "Ask thy father, and he will shew thee, thy elders, and they will tell thee." Judg. vi. 13, "Where be all his miracles, which our fathers told us of?" Ps. xlv. 1, "We have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us."

But to this I answer,

1. These Scriptures prove no more, than that the fathers told the children what they had seen; and that the instruction of parents is of good use for the propagation and preservation of religion. But how does this prove that tradition is necessary, or that the Jews used tradition more than Scripture, or that they used the tradition of things unwritten, more than the written word of God?

3. If this will prove they used tradition more than Scripture, by the same way we may prove they used Scripture more than tradition. For they were commanded to have the law read, Deut. xxxi. 11, 12, 13; and to ask the priests concerning it, Hag. ii. 11. Mal. ii. 7.

4. Indeed these two, writing and teaching what was written, are consistent; and are therefore joined together: Deut. vi. 6, 7, 8. "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children," &c. "And thou shalt write them," &c. Deut. xxxi. 9.

5. If we should grant that the Jews used tradition more than Scripture, yet that is not from the texts Bellarmine produces, but from another sort, which is not much to the credit of his doctrine; such as Mark vii. 3, 8, 9, 13, when they equalled their traditions with the law of God.

6. It is some abatement to this argument, that when our Saviour twenty times appeals to Scripture, "Is it not written in the law?" That he never so much as once points them to tradition.

SECT. 3.—The next thing the Cardinal undertakes to shew, is, that there is such an unwritten word. All that has been said before by him, is indeed little to the purpose. For what if tradition was once necessary, and that there was a tradition without a written word? What if the word was preached before it was written? (which is another branch of his argument). Or, what if there were many things spoken and done by our blessed Saviour and his Apostles that are not written? When all this may be, and yet not in the least touch the point in dispute. For the case we are now concerned in is, whether there be any necessity of a tradition, where there is a written word? Or, whether there be indeed any such tradition? If this last be proved, all is proved; and this he doth at length attempt to do by Scripture.

His texts are as follows:—

John xxi. 25. "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."* His argument from hence is, "It appears, therefore, that the Lord did and spake many things which are not written. For one hand can hold the books which are extant, but St. John saith, the whole world cannot receive the books," &c.

Ans. 1. There is no one questions, but that many things were spoken and done by Christ that are not written (for so much St. John plainly affirms), but what is this to the thing to be proved, which is, that there are things necessary to salvation which are not written? The same St. John tells us, chap. xx. 30, 31, that "these things are written that ye might believe, and that believing ye might have life:" and certainly then, if any thing farther had been necessary to salvation, it would have been written, and especially when it is acknow-

* C. 5. Sect. Ac primum. [Ibid. p. 109. c. 1.]

ledged, that many things not necessary to salvation are written.

2. I answer, that, according to St. Austin, this place is rather to be otherwise understood; not that the material world cannot contain so many material books, but that the world, upon some incapacity, would not receive them. And indeed, so we find the word *χωρεῖν* sometimes signifies, as Matth. xix. 11.

3. If the things that were not written were so many, that the world could not contain the books if they had been written, then where has tradition disposed them, when one so well acquainted with it as Bellarmine was, after all his search and consultation with the traditionary Church, can find out no more than the perpetual virginity* of the Virgin Mary, the dominical observation of Easter, the baptism of infants, the sacrifice of the altar, the form and matter of their additional sacraments, the ordination of ministers, and rites and ceremonies? And of the two former of which he saith, "*credendum est*, it is to be believed;" and of the five last, "*merito censent Catholici*, the Catholics do deservedly think so."† If they had this treasure, or the key to it, they would certainly produce more of it, and speak of it with greater assurance.

4. We may more rightly suppose, that if the world itself could not contain the books that should be written, that it could not preserve the things if they had not been written, but were to be delivered from hand to hand, from mouth to mouth. And therefore, that the same reason there was why they were not committed to writing, is a reason why they are not to be found extant without writing.

Another text is,

John xvi. 12. "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now." From hence Bellarmine observes, 1. "That without doubt the Lord spake those things after his resurrection, which he here promised that he would. 2. That the evangelists wrote very little concerning what he did and spake after his resurrection. 3. That it is not in any wise credible, that the Apostles delivered not to the Churches those things which they had seen and heard, for they were neither envious nor forgetful, that they either would not or could not tell those things." I answer,

1. The special things which our Saviour here respects,

* C. 4. Sect. Octavo. [Ibid. 106. c. 1.]

† C. 5. Sect. Alterum. [Ibid. p. 109. c. 2.]

seem to be concerning his death, it was his "going away," ver. 7, which they could not "bear," and were always averse to hear of, Matth. xvi. 22, "Be it far from thee;" and did not understand it, Mark viii. 31, 32, and ix. 31, and ver. 16 of this chapter.

2. If they were the things after his resurrection, yet it doth not follow that they were other things than what are recorded. For he then "spoke of the things concerning the kingdom of God," Acts i. 3.

3. If the Apostles did deliver what they were obliged to deliver to the Church, it was neither a sign of their "envy" or "forgetfulness" if they delivered no more; no more than it was in St. John, that recorded not all he knew of the life of our Saviour.

His next testimony is,

1 Cor. xi. 2. "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the precepts" (as he reads it), or traditions of ordinances, "as I delivered them to you." Which ordinances, saith he, relating to the manner of praying, and of receiving the eucharist, are no where to be found written. And further, the Apostle doth give so much to tradition, and the custom of the Church, that he saith, ver. 16, "If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God." I answer—

Answ. 1. There is no necessity of interpreting this of any other tradition, than of what is contained in Scripture, *viz.* the great doctrines and rules of it, which the Apostles delivered to them when present, and he now writes to them when absent. For so we find he did, ver. 23, "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you:" and which he again writ to them, "that the Lord Jesus the same night," &c. And Bellarmine* doth acknowledge, that tradition is a word of general signification, and comprehends in it the doctrine as well written as not written; and instances in Acts vi. 14, "Jesus shall change the customs which Moses delivered us," meaning, as he saith, the written law of Moses.

2. If it refers to things of order and discipline, then the general rule, "the custom of the Church," is of good use, and which it is fit in all lawful things should be observed; and the reason is, because in things not necessary, the peace of the Church, and communion with it, is much more valuable

* C. 2. Sect. Nomen. [Ibid. p. 100. c. 1.]

than a man's own particular fancy or opinion. But then I add,

3. That there is no necessity of so much as knowing, and consequently not of following the customs of the Church in that age, no farther than the custom is decent and orderly in itself; but then it is not so much because of the custom, as of the nature and reason of the thing that it is to be observed. And so the Apostle appeals to this, 1 Cor. xi. 13, "Judge in yourselves; is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?"

His next Scripture is,

1 Cor. xi. 23. "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you;" and the Apostle concludes, ver. 34, "The rest will I set in order when I come." "But," saith he, "what he thus set in order is no where written. But his Catholics do deservedly think that he set in order, not only what pertained to rites and ceremonies, but also, that he delivered other greater things, as concerning the ordination of ministers, and the sacrifice of the altar, and the form and matter of the other sacraments, neither can the heretics by any means shew the contrary."

I answer,

His first place is directly against the doctrine of Tradition; or what he delivered unto them, was such things as are there and elsewhere writ; and if we may judge of the other things the Apostle insists upon by these, we have reason to conclude the things delivered them by word, were the same as are now contained in Scripture.

As to the second place, I answer,

1. That what the Apostle said he would set in order, were doubtless those things which, by their epistle sent to him, 1 Cor. vii. 1, or the information of others, chap. i. 11, were declared to be out of order; such as the reformation of manners, and the due exercise of discipline, 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21.

2. We may more confidently affirm than they deny, that there is nothing absolutely necessary to the general and good order of the Church, and the administration of worship, but what is contained in Scripture.

3. It is something hard, that he requires the heretics to prove a negative. But I think it rather becomes them to prove what they affirm, that the Apostle when he came to Corinth, did order "the sacrifice of the altar" in their sense, and "the form and matter" of their five additional sacraments. But this they are never able to prove from Scripture, that the

Cardinal speaks not of; nay, nor from tradition. So that though he saith, "the Catholics do deservedly so think," it is a thought of their own, but without any manner of proof.

But their principal text is,

2 Thess. ii. 15. "Stand fast, and hold the traditions that ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." From whence the Touchstone* observes: "Hence it is clear, that some traditions were delivered to the Thessalonians by 'word of mouth,' and those of equal authority with what was written, if not of more; for the Holy Ghost doth name them first (as they were indeed the first in being)." And Bellarmine saith, that "the Apostle commands, that they no less observe what they had received without writing, than what they received by epistle."

I answer,

1. That some, nay we will say more, that all traditions necessary to salvation, were delivered by word of mouth, is undeniable, since the things written in Scripture that are necessary to salvation, were first delivered by word of mouth before they were written. So Bellarmine saith, that "without doubt the Apostle had fully preached the whole Gospel to them, as may be collected from the first and second chapters of the former Epistle:" and because the things then spoken, were the same with what was afterwards wrote, we grant also, that they were of equal authority; and that what the Apostle said, was of as good authority as what he wrote. For where the person speaking and writing are the same, and the things spoken and written are the same, they are of the same authority; nor can the difference in the manuer of delivery make any difference in the things. So that the Apostle calls speaking and writing by the same word, teaching, and the things taught or written by the same word, traditions; "hold the traditions ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle."

So that what is above alleged, is not at all to the point. For the question betwixt us is not, whether there was never any tradition? Or, whether what is now wrote, was not first taught? Or, that what was taught by the Apostle, was not of as good authority as what he wrote? But whether there are any such things now of Apostolical tradition? Or, that there are things necessary to salvation, that are preserved by tradition only, and are not written? And to come to the place, whether the

* Touchstone of the Reformed Gospel, chap. 4.

Apostle, by bidding them "hold fast the traditions," did thereby understand such traditions as were never to be committed to writing, by him or any other inspired person, and which they were yet equally to receive, and were as necessary to be received as what were written? Whether, for example, what he taught concerning the coming of Antichrist, ver. 5, 6, which Bellarmine saith, "is no where writ," is now as knowable by us, and is as necessary to salvation to be known and believed, as what is revealed and written.

2. I shall add, in confirmation of what I have said, that the Apostle gives more than an intimation what traditions he means, by the word *therefore*. "Therefore stand fast, and hold the traditions," which refers us to the words going immediately before, ver. 13, 14: "We are bound to give thanks always for you, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore,"—by which we may understand, of what nature and consequence the things were, which, when present, he delivered unto them, and taught them; and farther wrote to them about. Such as their salvation, and the glory they should obtain by Jesus Christ. Such as the conditions that qualified them for it, *viz.* holiness and truth, the "sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth;" such as the means by which they, and so others, were called and converted, and that is, the preaching of the Gospel.

3. The Apostle had reason to refer them to what they had heard from him, or he had wrote to them; because it was not long before that Church had been planted by him; and because there was, it is probable, little, if any thing of the New Testament, at that time, committed to writing, besides that Epistle, Acts xv. 23, and the first to the Thessalonians (which it is probable was the first he wrote); and that consequently he could refer them to no other way, than what he had referred them to.

4. I may still add, where are these traditions necessary to salvation, which the Apostle delivered to the Thessalonian Church, and are not to be found in Scripture? If such there be, let them that plead it produce them, and then we shall give them another answer.

To this I acknowledge, Bellarmine has a ready answer; for, saith he, the Apostle tells them in this chapter, that he had

preached to them concerning Antichrist, and when he should come, but of this last there is nothing in Scripture.

But I reply,

1. There are many things spoken of that point, even as to the time of Antichrist's appearance; and which are not the less delivered in Scripture, because it is not yet fully evident, which may be for the reason given by our Saviour, John xvi. 4.

2. But is this necessary to salvation? Or,

3. What help have we from tradition for it, setting aside what may be collected from Scripture? The saying Bellarmine produces from St. Austin, to shew (that which no body denies) that all things are not now written which the Apostles did and taught, returns upon himself, *viz.* "they knew what the Apostle taught then by word of mouth; but we cannot know that, who have not heard the Apostle."*

Bellarmino proceeds to prove this point of tradition the same way, and from the same texts, with some heretics in the time of Tertullian.†

1 Tim. vi. 20, "Keep that which is committed to thy trust." 2 Tim. i. 13, 14, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me. That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." Chap. ii. 1, 2, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

"In which places," saith the Cardinal, "by the word *depositum*, or that which was committed to his trust, could not be understood Scripture, but the treasure of doctrine, the meaning of Scripture, as well as of other principles, which whole doctrine the Apostle would have to be propagated by tradition. For if he would have spoken of a written word, he would not so solicitously recommended the *depositum*; for that might be easily kept in boxes or by notaries. But the Apostle would have it kept by the Holy Ghost in Timothy's heart. And further, the Apostle then would not have said, 'commit this to faithful men,' but to notaries, that they may transcribe many copies of it. Nor would he have said, 'which thou hast heard from me before many witnesses,' but, which I have written unto thee."

* De Civit. Dei, l. 20. c. 10. [c. 19. p. 597. Par. 1685.]

† De Præscript. c. 25. [ut supra, p. 210.]

Ans. 1. The Cardinal takes the pains to prove that which nobody denies, and to disprove that which nobody affirms. For, 1. Who denies but that the Apostle preached to the Ephesians before he wrote to them, and taught Timothy before he wrote these two Epistles to him? Again, who is there affirms, that St. Paul meant, by the good thing which he committed to Timothy, a certain writing, when the Apostle himself applies it to the things he heard of him. But now granting that this is meant of doctrine taught, and not of doctrine written, what will he be able to infer from hence? Can he infer, that those things that the Apostle preached at Ephesus (where he taught them "the whole counsel of God," Acts xx. 27), or taught Timothy, were never written? And that those things which were never written, were yet necessary to salvation? He may as well undertake to prove from hence, that there was never afterwards a written rule of faith, and that tradition was sufficient in itself, though there be no written word; and that there is no need of the assistance of the Holy Ghost, to keep in our minds and memories that which is written. And all this would as well follow from what the Apostle here saith, as that which he should have proved from it.

All these little offers at an argument, do suppose the case then to be the case for ever, and that because when they had not a written word, the Apostle exhorted them to be careful to remember what he had taught, that therefore there must be always an unwritten Gospel which they could not know without, and must depend upon their guides for the knowledge of. And that they must for ever give as much heed to tradition after the Gospel was committed to writing, and the defect of tradition thereby supplied, as before.

Ans. 2. We may judge of what kind these things committed to Timothy were, by considering the places themselves, as 1 Tim. vi. 20, "Keep that which is committed to thy trust:" how is that? "Avoiding profane and vain babblings," (such as he calls "perverse disputings," ver. 5), whatever might tend to the derogation of that "doctrine which is according to godliness," ver. 3, and which he therefore charges him to keep, ver. 14, "Keep this commandment." So 2 Tim. i. 13, 14, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus:" which is no other than the doctrine of salvation by Christ, and of adherence to him in all difficulties, ver. 9, 10.

So chap. ii. 1, 2. "The things thou hast heard," &c. is the

same with what he himself was to remember, ver. 8, and put others in remembrance of, ver. 14, *viz.* the Gospel which he preached, and such articles as the resurrection of Christ from the dead; and what he learned from the Scriptures, chap. iii. 14, 15. Now what are these things, but the same we find frequently inculcated in Scripture?

His last proofs are from the second Epistle of John, ver. 12. "Having many things to write unto you; I would not write with paper and ink; but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face;" so Epist. iii. 13, 14. "From hence," saith the Cardinal, "we understand that many things were spoken by the Apostle, which are not written."

Ans. 1. What then? So were many things done by our Saviour, which were never committed to writing; but it follows not, that they were such things as were necessary to to salvation; and without the knowledge of which salvation is not to be obtained. *

Ans. 2. How will they prove these things were never written by St. John? When Bellarmine tells us,* that he wrote his Gospel late, and seems to consent to that of Chemnitius, that he wrote it after the Apocalypse.

Having now considered all the texts produced by Bellarmine for the insufficiency of Scripture, and the necessity and certainty of tradition, we may reasonably presume that there are none remaining, that can to any purpose serve the cause, after what so diligent a writer has collected: and indeed, whatever are produced in the Touchstone, or Catholic Scripturist, either touch not the cause at all, or require no other answer than these already mentioned. But because I would not be wanting in any thing that may be expected, and that withal, it may give some little light to the argument, I will briefly shew what it is the remaining texts are brought to prove, and how little they prove the matter in question.

They are brought to prove,

1. That the world was for some time without a written word, and had nothing but tradition and verbal teaching: "and yet many then had that faith which is defined, Heb. xi. 1. By this they learned to keep† the Sabbath, to know the distinction of beasts clean and unclean, Gen vii. 2, &c. And so it was with the Christian Church. It was a Gospel

* Cap. 4. §. Joannem. [Ibid. p. 104. c. 2.] Cap. 10. §. Ad secundum. [Ibid. p. 120. c. 2.]

† Cath. Script. Point. 2. n. 2.

they received, Gal. i. 8, which, saith he, intimates they had all by tradition."

Ans. 1. But this argument I have considered before, and shall add, that this is not the case, for that was before there was a written word, and the defect in which was one reason for its being written: but the case now is, when there is a written word. And whereas he saith, "Now give me one text if you can, which bids us not to take tradition for a rule of faith, after the writing of Scripture:" I answer, there are as many against it, as there are for the sufficiency of Scripture, such as 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, Luke x. 25, and xvi. 29, &c.

2. The texts produced serve to prove, that what was spoken by inspired persons, was of as good authority, and equally to be received, as what was written by such. So they apply,* Acts ii. 36, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus," &c. From the word *assuredly*, he infers, "We may then have an infallible faith of what is not written, yea, we are forbidden to believe otherwise than was delivered by tradition, 2 Thess. ii. 15, 'hold the traditions.' For what he taught by his tongue, was as truly the word of God, as what he wrote with his pen. Yea, this which I call tradition, is the epistle of Christ," 2 Cor. iii. 3, 'You are the epistle of Christ, not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.' Wherefore most of the Apostles did give their converts no other form of belief, but what by their preaching they had written in their hearts."

Ans.—Setting aside how the Corinthians and tradition were both the Epistle of Christ; the general answer to this is, that no one denies that the Apostolical infallibility and authority was equally the same, in what was spoken or written by them; but what is this to prove that there is such a tradition derived from the same hand, and not contained in Scripture, which doth yet contain things as necessary, as what are in it? For all this while they suppose there is the same reason for tradition after a written word, as there was before it. They suppose there is the same proof for their traditions, as for the Christian doctrine; and they impose their traditions without ever proving either that there are such, or that their's are of that number. If indeed they could prove that there were such traditions delivered by the Apostles, to be continued in the Christian Church, which they themselves

* Ibid. n. 4.

never did write ; and to be alike necessary to be received as those that were written by them ; if these men could prove their principles and practices which they plead tradition for, to be of that number, we are ready to receive them ; and should then think ourselves bound by that of the Apostle, “to stand fast, and hold the traditions which have been taught, whether by word or epistle ;” and with Timothy, “to continue in those things which we thus learn ;” if we are assured of them, and know, as he did, of whom we learned them, and that they were as much the doctrines and precepts of the Apostles, as those contained in Scripture are. And whereas they plead, that we receive the Scripture by tradition : if they can prove their tradition by tradition, to be as much the traditions of inspired persons, as we can prove the Scriptures to be written by such, and to be the Scriptures which they wrote, we are as ready to receive such tradition, as they would be to have us receive it. But when there is no proof of this, and that a *merito censent*, “they deservedly think,” is the upshot of all that their learned champion doth produce ; we may boldly conclude there is no evidence for it ; and that Scripture is no more for their kind of tradition, than it is against itself.

**THE PROTESTANT RULE OF FAITH,
EXPLAINED AND VINDICATED.**

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BOOK I.

THE PROTESTANT RULE OF FAITH, EXPLAINED AND VINDICATED, BY WAY OF GENERAL DEFENCE.

THE PROTESTANT RESOLUTION OF FAITH,

BEING AN ANSWER TO

THREE QUESTIONS.

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- III. Whether the Church of England can make out such a visible succession ?*

THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

THESE Papers, which are here presented to thee, were written for the use of a private person, and by the advice of some friends are now made public. We find how busy the Romish emissaries are to corrupt our people, and think ourselves equally concerned to antidote them against Popery and fanaticism : two extremes equally dangerous to the government of Church and State in these kingdoms, both in their principles and practices ; and both of them very great corruptions of the Christian religion, and very dangerous to men's souls. Some of our Clergy have already been so charitable to our Dissenters, as to warn them of their danger, and by the strength and evidence of Scripture and reason, to convince them of their mistakes ; and I pray God forgive those men, and turn their hearts, who

will not contribute so much to their own conviction and satisfaction, as diligently and impartially to read and consider what is so charitably offered to them. Ignorance and mistake may excuse men, who have no opportunities of knowing better, but such wilful and resolved ignorance, which bars up men's minds against all means of better information, will as soon damn them as sins against knowledge.

And now it might justly be thought want of charity to those of the Roman communion, should we take no care at all for them ; nay, want of charity to those of our own communion, and to Dissenters themselves, who are daily assaulted by the busy factors for Rome. For the disputes against the Church of Rome, as well as against Dissenters, are for the most part too learned and too voluminous for the instruction of ordinary people, and therefore, some short and plain discourses about the principal matters in dispute between us, is the most effectual way we can take to confirm men in their religion, and preserve them from the crafty insinuations of such as lie in wait to deceive.

Some few attempts, which have been already made of that kind, give me some hope that several other tracts will follow, that the ruin of the Church of England (if God shall please ever to permit such a thing), whether by Popery or fanaticism, may not be charged upon our neglect to instruct people better.

Some persons, it seems, whose talent lies more in censuring what others do, than in doing any good themselves, are pleased to put some sinister constructions on this design ; as it is impossible to design anything so well, but men of ill minds, who know not what it means to do good for good's sake, shall be able to find some bad name for it. Some guess that we now write against Popery only to play an after-game, and to regain the favour and good opinion of Dissenters, which we have lost by writing against them : but I know not that any man has lost their favour by it, nor that any man values their favour for any other reason, than to have the greater advantage of doing them good. If so good a work, as confuting the errors of the Church of Rome, will give the Dissenters such a good opinion of us, as to make them more impartially consider what has been writ to persuade them to communion with the Church of England, I know no reason any man has to be ashamed to own it, though it were part of his design ; but whether it is or not, is more than I know ; I dare undertake for those persons I am acquainted with, that they neither value the favour,

nor fear the displeasure either of fanatics or Papists, but yet heartily desire to do good to them both.

But there is a more mischievous suggestion than this, that the design of such papers is only to raise a new cry and noise about Popery, and to alarm the people, and disturb the government with new fears and jealousies: truly, if I thought this would be the effect of it, I would burn my papers presently; for I am sure the Church of England will get nothing by a tumultuary and clamorous zeal against the Church of Rome, and I had much rather suffer under Popery, than contribute any thing towards raising a popular fury to keep it out. We profess ourselves as irreconcilable enemies to Popery, as we are to fanaticism, and desire that all the world may know it; but we will never rebel nor countenance any rebellion against our lawful Sovereign to keep out either, we leave such principles and practices to Papists and fanatics. But when we find our people assaulted by the agents of Rome, and do not think ourselves secure from Popish designs, we think it our duty to give them the best instructions we can to preserve them from such errors, as we believe will destroy their souls; and cannot but wonder, that any men, who are as much concerned to take care of souls as we are, should think this a needless or a scandalous undertaking. I wish such men would speak out, and tell us plainly what they think of Popery themselves. If they think this design not well managed by those who undertake it, it would more become them to commend the design, and do it better themselves; I know no man, but would very gladly be excused, as having other work enough to employ his time, but yet I had rather spend my vacant minutes this way, than in censuring the good that other men do, while I do none myself.

The words of the Paper, which was sent to me, are these.

“It is my opinion, that the infinite goodness of our Legislator has left to us a means of knowing the true sense and meaning of the holy Scriptures, which is the Church: now I judge this Church must be known to be the true Church, by its continual visible succession from Christ till our days. But I doubt whether or no the Protestant Church can make out this continual visible succession, and desire to be informed.”

Answer.

That Christ has left a means of knowing the true sense and meaning of the holy Scriptures, I readily grant ; or else it had been to no purpose to have left us the Scriptures. But the latter clause is very ambiguous, for the meaning may either be, that we may understand by the true sense and meaning of the Scriptures, which is the Church ; or that the Church is the means whereby we must understand the true sense and meaning of the Scripture.

The first is a true Protestant principle, and therefore, I presume, not intended by this objector. For how we should know that there is any Church, without the information we receive by Scripture, I cannot divine ; and yet we may as easily know that there is a Church, as we can know which is the true Church without the Scripture. For there is no other means of knowing, either that there is a Church, or what this Church is, or what are the properties of a true and sound and orthodox Church, but by revelation, and we have no other revelation of this, but what is contained in the holy Scriptures.

As for the second, that the Church is the means of knowing the true sense and meaning of the Scriptures, it is in some sense very true, in some sense very false.

1. It is in some sense true, and acknowledged by all sober Protestants. As, 1. If by the Church, we understand the universal Church of all ages, as we receive the Scriptures themselves handed down by them to our time, so whatever doctrines of faith have been universally received by them, is one of the best means to find out the true sense of Scripture. For the nearer they were to the times of the Apostles, the more likely they were to understand the true sense of their writings, being instructed by the Apostles themselves in the meaning of them. And thus we have a certain rule to secure us from all dangerous errors in expounding Scripture. For the great and fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion, are as plainly contained in the writings of the first Fathers of the Church, and as unanimously asserted by them, as the authority of the Scriptures themselves : and therefore, though we have not a traditionary exposition of every particular text of Scripture, yet we have of the great and fundamental doctrines of faith, and therefore, must never expound Scripture so as to contradict the known and avowed sense of the catholic Church.

And this course the Church of England takes ; she receives the definitions of the four first General Councils, and requires her bishops and clergy to expound the Scriptures, according to the profest doctrines of those first and purest ages of the Church.

2. We ought to pay great deference to, and not lightly and wantonly oppose the judgment and authority of the particular Church wherein we live, when her expositions of Scripture do not evidently and notoriously contradict the sense of the catholic Church, especially of the first and best ages of it. For it does not become private men to oppose their sentiments and opinions to the judgment of the Church, unless in such plain cases, as every honest man may be presumed a very competent judge in the matter ; and no Church, nor all the Churches in the world have such authority, that we must renounce our senses, and deny the first principles of reason, to follow them with a blind and implicit faith.

And thus the Church, that is, the sense and judgment of the catholic Church, is a means for the finding out the true sense of Scripture ; and though we may mistake the sense of some particular texts (which the Romanists themselves will not deny, but that even infallible Councils may do, who, though they are infallible in their conclusions, yet are not always so in the arguments or mediums, whether drawn from Scripture or reason, whereby they prove them), yet it is morally impossible we should be guilty of any dangerous mistake, while we make the catholic doctrine of the Church our rule ; and in other matters follow the judgment, and submit to the authority of the Church, wherein we live ; which is as absolutely necessary, as peace and order and good government in the Church.

2. But then this is very false, if we mean that the Church is the only means of finding out the true sense of the Scriptures ; or if by the Church we understand any particular Church, as I suppose this person does the Roman Catholic, that is, the particular universal Church of Rome ; or, if we mean the Church of the present age, or by *means* understand such a decretory sentence, as must determine our faith and command our assent ; that we must seek for no other reason of our faith, but the authority of the Church in expounding Scriptures. I shall discourse something briefly of each of these.

1. To say that the Church is the only means to find out the true sense of Scripture, is very false and absurd. For, 1.

This supposes the holy Scriptures to be a very unintelligible book, which is a great reproach to the Holy Spirit, by which it was indited, that he either could not, or would not speak intelligibly to the world.

2. This is a direct contradiction to those exhortations of Christ and his Apostles, to study the Scriptures, which were made to private men, and therefore necessarily supposes, that the holy Scriptures are to be understood as other writings are, by considering the propriety of the words and language wherein they are written, the scope and design of the place, and such other means, as honest and studious inquirers use, to find out the meaning of any other book.

3. If the Scriptures are so unintelligible, that an honest man cannot find out the meaning of them, without the infallible interpretation of the Church, I would desire to know whether Christ and his Apostles preached intelligibly to their hearers? If they did not, to what purpose did they preach at all? By what means were men converted to the faith? If they did, how come these sermons to be so unintelligible now they are written, which were so intelligible when they were spoken? For the Gospels contain a plain history of what Christ did, and of what he said; and the Apostles wrote the same things to the Churches when they were absent, which they preached to them when they were present: and we reasonably suppose, that they as much designed that the Churches should understand what they wrote, as what they preached, and therefore, that they generally used the same form of words in their writing and in their preaching: and this makes it a great riddle, how one should be very plain and easy to be understood, and the other signify nothing without an infallible interpreter.

4. If the Scriptures be in themselves unintelligible, I would desire to know how the Church comes to understand them? If by any human means, together with the ordinary assistances of the Divine Spirit, then they are to be understood, and then why may not every Christian, in proportion to his skill in languages, and in the rules of reason and discourse, understand them also?

If the Church cannot understand the Scriptures by any human means, but only by inspiration (for there is no medium between these two), to what purpose were the Scriptures written? For we might as well have learned the will of God from the Church, without the Scriptures, as with them. God could have immediately revealed his will to the Church without

a written rule, as well as reveal the meaning of that written rule, which it seems, has no signification at all, till the Church, by inspiration, gives an orthodox meaning to it.

5. And if we cannot understand the Scriptures, till the Church expounds them to us, how shall we know which is the Church, and that this Church is such an infallible interpreter of Scriptures? The Church is to be known only by the Scriptures, and the Scriptures are to be understood only by the Church; if we will know the Church, we must first understand the Scriptures, and if we will understand the Scriptures, we must first know the Church, and when both must be known first, or we can know neither, it is impossible in this way, either to understand the Scriptures, or find out the Church. For, suppose the Church does expound Scripture by inspiration, how shall we be assured that it does so? Must we believe every man, or every Church, which pretends to inspiration? This is a contradiction to the Apostle's rule, not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits. How then shall they be tried? I know but two ways, either by miracles, or by Scripture. Miracles are now ceased, unless we will believe some fabulous legends, which all wise men in the Church of Rome are ashamed of; and if there were real miracles wrought, they are of no authority against a standing rule of faith, which the Apostle calls a more sure word of prophecy. If then we must judge of these pretences to revelation by the Scriptures, which is the only way now left, then there is a way of understanding the Scriptures without this revelation; for if we must understand the Scriptures by revelation, and revelation by the Scriptures, we are got into a new circle, and can understand neither.

Obj. But do we not see how many schisms and heresies have been occasioned, by suffering every one to expound Scripture for himself? How many divisions and sub-divisions are there among Protestants, who agree in little else, besides their opposition to Popery? And is it possible to cure this without an infallible interpreter of Scriptures? Is it not a contradiction to common experience, to say, that the sense of Scripture is plain and certain, when so few men can agree what it is?

Ans. 1. Yes, we do see this, and lament it, and are beholden to the Church of Rome, and her emissaries, in a great measure, for it. But yet we know, thus it has been in all ages of the Christian Church, as well as now; and we take the same way to confute these heresies, and to preserve the

purity of the faith, and the unity of the Church, which the primitive Fathers did, by appealing to Scripture, and the doctrine and practice of the catholic Church, which is the best way any Church can take, where there is no infallible judge of controversies: and if the primitive Church had known any such infallible judge, they would certainly have appealed to him at one time or other; and it had been impossible, that any errors or heresies should for any long time together have disturbed the Church; but we hear nothing of him for many hundred years after Christ: but the ancient Fathers took the same way to confute the heresies of their days, which we do now, which is a good probable argument that they knew no better. And the present divisions of the Christian Church, are no greater arguments against us, than the ancient heresies were against the primitive Church, or than the Protestant heresies (as they are pleased to call them) are against the Church of Rome? For what advantage has the Church of Rome upon this account, above any other profession of Christians? Those who are of the same communion, are of the same mind. Thus it is among us, and it is no better among them; for we are no more of their mind, than they of ours; nay, notwithstanding all their pretences to infallibility, most of the disputes, which divide the Protestant Churches, are as fairly disputed among themselves; witness the famous controversy between the Jansenists and Molinists; which their infallible judge never thought fit to determine to this day: they live indeed in the communion of the same Church, notwithstanding these disputes, because it is a very dangerous thing to leave it; but they are more beholden to the inquisition than to infallibility for this unity.

2. How do these divisions and heresies, which disturb the Church, prove, that no man can be certain of his religion? If we can certainly know what the sense of Scripture is, notwithstanding there are many different opinions about it, then the diversity of opinions is no argument against us; if we cannot be certain of any thing, which others deny, dispute, or doubt of, then how can any Papist be certain that his Church is infallible? For all the rest of the Christian Church deny this, and scorn their pretensions to it. I may indeed safely acquiesce in the determinations of an infallible judge, whom I am infallibly assured to be infallible, how many contrary opinions soever there are in the world: but when infallibility itself is the matter of the dispute, and I have no infallible way to know

whether there be any such thing, or where this infallibility is seated, if diversity of opinions be an argument against the certainty of any thing, which I am not, and cannot be infallibly assured of, then it is a certain demonstration against infallibility itself.

Unless we will take the Church of Rome's word for her own infallibility, we cannot have the decision of an infallible judge in this matter; for she will allow no other infallible judge but herself; and yet this is so absurd a way, that it supposes, that we believe and that we disbelieve the same thing at the same time. For unless we beforehand believe the Church to be infallible, her saying so is no infallible proof that she is infallible; and yet the very demand of a proof supposes that we are not certain of it, that we doubt of it, or disbelieve it. When we ask the Church whether she be infallible, it supposes that we are not certain of it, otherwise we should need no proof; and when we believe the Church to be infallible, because she says so, it supposes that we did beforehand believe that she is infallible, otherwise her saying so is no proof.

The greatest champions for the Church of Rome, never pretended that they could produce any infallible proofs which is the true Church. Cardinal Bellarmine attempts no more than to allege some motives of credibility, to make the thing probable, and to incline men to believe it; and yet it is impossible we can be more certain of the infallibility of the Church, than we are that it is a true Church; and if a Papist have only some motives of credibility, to believe the Church of Rome to be a true Church, he can have no greater probabilities that it is an infallible Church.

Now to take notice, what a tottering foundation some high probabilities, though they amounted to a moral assurance, is for the belief of infallibility (which is to put more in the conclusion than there is in the premises); the only use I shall make of it at present is this, that we can at least be as certain of the meaning of Scripture, as the Papists are that their Church is infallible; for they can be no more infallibly assured of this, than we are of our interpretations of Scripture; and, therefore, if the diversity of opinions about the sense of Scripture, proves that we cannot be certain what the true sense of it is, the same argument proves, that they cannot be certain that their Church is infallible, because this is not only doubted, but absolutely denied by the greatest part of the Christian world, and was never thought of by the best and purest part

of it. So that this argument proves too much, and recoils upon themselves, like a gun which is overcharged ; and if, for their own sakes, they will grant that we may be certain of some things, which are as confidently denied, and disputed by others ; then the diversity of opinions in the Church, is no argument, that we cannot be certain of our religion, but only teaches us greater caution, and diligence, and honesty, in our inquiries after truth.

3. These divisions and heresies that are in the Christian Church, are no better argument against the truth and certainty of our religion, than the diversities of religions that are in the world, are against the truth of Christianity. The whole world is far enough from being Christian ; great part of it are Jews, or Pagans, or Mahometans still ; and this is as good an argument, to prove the uncertainty of all religions, as the different parties and professions of Christians are to prove, that we cannot be certain what the true Christian Church, nor what true Christianity is. The Gospel of our Saviour was not designed to offer any force or violence to men's faith or understanding, no more than to their wills. Were there such an irresistible and compulsory evidence in the Gospel, that wherever it were preached, it should be impossible for any man, though never so wicked and ill-disposed, to continue an infidel, or to prove a heretic, faith would be no greater a virtue, than forced obedience and compliance is. The Gospel has evidence enough to convince honest minds, and is plain enough to be understood, by those who are honest and teachable ; and, therefore, has its effects upon those who are curable, which is all that it was designed for. Those who will not believe, may continue infidels, and those, who will not understand, may fall into errors, and believe a lie ; and yet there is evidence enough to convince, and plainness enough to instruct well-disposed minds, and certainty enough in each, to be the foundation of a divine faith.

The sum is this ; though the instructions of the Church are a very good means for the understanding of the sense of Scripture, yet they are not the only means ; the holy Scripture is a very intelligible book, in such matters as are absolutely necessary to salvation ; and could we suppose, that a man, who had never heard of a Church, should have the use of the Bible, in a language which he understood, by a diligent reading of it he might understand enough to be saved.

2. If by Church, is meant any particular Church ; as sup-

pose the Roman Catholic Church, or the Church of the present age, it is absolutely false to say, that the Church, in this sense, is always a sure and safe means of understanding the Scripture. What has been universally believed by all Christian Churches, in all ages, or at least, by all Churches of the first and purest ages of Christianity, which were nearest the times of the Apostles, and might be presumed best to understand the sense of the Apostles in the great articles of our faith, is a very safe rule for the interpretation of Scripture ; and the general practice of those primitive apostolic Churches, in matters of government and discipline, before they were corrupted by worldly ambition and secular interest, is a very safe rule for our practice also, and this is the rule whereby our Church is reformed, and to which we appeal.

There are but three things necessary to be understood by Christians, either the articles of faith, or the rules of life, or the external order and discipline of the Church, and administration of religious offices.

1. As for the rules of life, all those duties which we owe to God and men, they are so plainly contained in the holy Scriptures, that no honest man can mistake them ; I suppose the Church of Rome herself, will not pretend that there is any need of an infallible interpreter, to teach men what is meant by loving God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.

2. As for the articles of faith, those which are fundamental to the Christian religion, and which every Christian ought to believe, are so plain in Scripture, that every honest and unprejudiced man may understand them : but, however, as I observed before, we govern ourselves in these things by the received doctrine of the catholic Church of the first and purest ages, and if this be not a safe rule, we can be certain of nothing. And what the catholic faith was, we learn from those short summaries of faith, which were universally owned by all catholic Churches. For what we now call the Apostles' Creed, was very anciently received in all Churches, with some little variety indeed of words and phrase, but without any difference of sense ; and the catholic faith was not only preserved in such short summaries and creeds, which were as liable to be perverted by heretics, as the Scriptures themselves, but was more largely explained in the writings of the ancient Fathers ; and though this will not enable us to understand every phrase and expression of Scripture, but we must use other means to do that, as skill in the Oriental languages, a knowledge of ancient

customs, and ancient disputes, to which the Apostles frequently allude, a consideration of the scope and design of the place, &c. Yet the catholic faith received and owned by the primitive Church, is so far a rule, as it directs us to expound Scripture to a true catholic sense. As St. Paul commands the Romans, that those who prophesy, should prophesy according to the proportion of faith, Rom. xii. 6. Κατ' ἀναλογίαν πίστεως, according to the analogy of faith : that is, that in the interpreting the Scriptures of the Old Testament, they should expound them to a Christian sense, according to those doctrines of the Christian faith which he had taught them ; and this was a safe rule for expounding the Old Testament, which contained the types, and figures, and prophecies of the Gospel-state. And thus in expounding the New Testament, now it is committed to writing, we must prophesy according to the analogy of faith, or as he commands Timothy in his preaching, "hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard from me," 2 Tim. i. 13. It seems the Apostle had given him a form of sound words, according to which he was to direct his preaching ; whether this refers to a short summary of faith, such as our Creed is, I cannot say, though it is not improbable it may ; but it is plain, we have a form of sound words delivered to us by the catholic Church, which contains the true catholic faith, and therefore ought to be so far a rule to us in expounding Scripture, as never to contradict any thing which is contained in it, for that is to contradict the faith of the catholic Church.

And when one great article of this faith, concerning the eternal Godhead of Christ the Son of God, was corrupted by Arius, a presbyter of the Church of Alexandria, it gave an occasion for a more full declaration of the sense of the catholic Church about it. And though the effects of that controversy were very fatal to the Church, yet it was very happy that it broke out in such an age, when it could be determined with greater certainty and greater authority, than it could have been in any succeeding age of the Church ; by men, who were venerable for their age, for their wisdom, for their piety, for their undaunted confessions under heathen and persecuting emperors, who knew what the sense of the catholic Church was, before this controversy broke out, and before external prosperity had, through ease and wantonness, corrupted the faith, as well as the manners of Christians.

3. As for matters of external order, discipline, and government, the universal practice of the catholic Church is the best and safest comment on those general rules and directions we

have laid down in Scripture. There is no doubt at all, but the Apostles did appoint governors, and rules of order and discipline, in the Churches planted by them; what these were, the Christians of those days saw with their eyes, in the daily practice of the Church; and therefore the Apostles, in those Epistles which they wrote to their several Churches, did not give them so punctual and particular an account of those matters, which they so well knew before, but, as occasion served, made only some accidental mention of these things, and that in such general terms as were well enough understood by them, who knew the practice of the Church in that age; but it may be, cannot merely by the force of the words, which may be capable of several senses, be so certainly and demonstratively determined to any one sense by us, who did not see what was done in those days, as to avoid all possible cavils of contentious men.

This has occasioned those disputes concerning infant baptism, the several orders and degrees of Church governors, the rites and ceremonies of religious worship, and the like. Those who lived in those days, and saw what the Apostles did in these matters, could not doubt of these things: though it were not in express words said, that infants should be baptized with their parents, or that bishops are a superior order to presbyters, and presbyters to deacons, or that it is lawful for the governors of the Church to institute and appoint some significant rites and ceremonies, for the more decent and orderly administration of religious offices. But because there is not a precise and punctual account given of these matters, in the writings of the Apostles, which there was no need of then, when these things were obvious to their very senses, some perverse and unreasonable disputers, who obstinately reject all other evidence, will judge of these things just as they please themselves, and alter their opinions and fancies as often as they please.

But now if there be any certain way to know what the practice of the Apostles was in these cases, this is the best comment we can possibly have on such texts, as are not sufficiently plain and express without it. Now methinks any reasonable man must acknowledge that the best way to understand the practice of the Apostles is from the practice of the catholic Church, in succeeding ages, especially while the memory of the Apostles was fresh, and the Church governed by Apostolical men; when we cannot reasonably suspect any deviation from the primitive practice; and this is the rule

which the Church of England owns in such matters, and by which she rejects and confutes both the innovations and corruptions of the Church of Rome, and the wild pretences of fanaticism.

So that we do in the most proper sense own the belief and practice of the primitive Church to be the best means for expounding Scripture. We do not leave every man to expound Scripture by a private spirit, as our adversaries of the Church of Rome reproach us; we adhere to the ancient catholic Church, which the Church of Rome on one side, and the fanatics on the other, have forsaken: and though we reject the new invention of an infallible judge, yet we are no friends at all to scepticism, but can give a more rational account of our faith than the Church of Rome can.

Had we no other way of understanding the sense of Scripture, but by propriety of the language, and the grammatical construction of the words, and the scope and design of the texts, their connection and dependence on what goes before, and what follows, and such like means as we use for the understanding any other books of human composition; I doubt not but honest and diligent inquirers might discover the true meaning of Scripture, in all the great articles of our faith; but yet this alone is a more uncertain way, and liable to the abuses of heretics and impostors. The Socinians are a famous example what wit and criticism will do to pervert the plainest texts; and some other sectaries are as plain a demonstration, what work dulness and stupidity and enthusiasm will make with Scripture; but when we have the practice of the catholic Church, and an ancient and venerable summary of the Christian faith, which has been the common faith of Christians in all ages, to be our rule in expounding Scripture, though we may after all mistake the sense of some particular texts, yet we cannot be guilty of any great and dangerous mistakes.

This use the Church of England makes of the catholic Church, in expounding Scripture, that she religiously maintains the ancient catholic faith, and will not suffer any man to expound Scriptures in opposition to the ancient faith and practice of the catholic Church.

But though the belief and practice of the catholic Church be the best means of understanding the true sense of Scripture, yet we cannot affirm this of any particular Church, or of the Church of any particular age, excepting the Apostolic age, or those ages which immediately succeeded the Apostles. Not-

withstanding this, the Church of Rome may be no good expositor of Scriptures; for the Church of Rome, though she usurp the name of the catholic Church, as presuming herself to be the head and fountain of catholic unity, yet she is but a part of the catholic Church, as the Church of England and the Churches of France and Holland are; and has no more right to impose her expositions of Scripture upon other Churches, than they have to impose upon her. If there happen any controversy between them, it is not the authority of either Church can decide it, but this must be done by an appeal to Scripture, and the sense of the catholic Church in the first and purest ages of it.

For when we say, that the belief and practice of the catholic Church, is the best means to find out the true sense of Scripture, we do not mean that the Church is the sovereign and absolute judge of the sense of Scripture; but the meaning is, that those Churches, which were founded by the Apostles, and received the faith immediately from them, and were afterwards, for some ages, governed by Apostolical men, or those who were taught by them, and conversed with them, are the best witnesses what the doctrine of the Apostles was; and therefore, as far as we can be certain, what the faith of these primitive Churches was, they are the best guides for the expounding Scripture.

So that the authority of the Church in expounding Scripture, being only the authority of witnesses, it can reach no farther than those ages, which may reasonably be presumed to be authentic and credible witnesses of the doctrine of the Apostles; and therefore, if we extend it to the four first General Councils it is as far as we can do it with any pretence of reason; and thus far the Church of England owns the authority of the Church, and commands her ministers to expound the Scriptures according to the catholic faith, owned and professed in those days; but as for the latter ages of the Church, which were removed too far from the Apostles' days to be witnesses of their doctrine, they have no more authority in this matter, than we have at this day, nor has one Church any more authority than another.

3. And therefore, if by the Church being the means of knowing the sense and meaning of the holy Scriptures, be understood the judgment and sentence and decree of the Church, that we must seek no farther for the reason of our

faith, than the infallible authority of the Church in expounding Scripture ; this also is absolutely false and absurd.

This is more than Christ and his Apostles assumed to themselves, while they were on earth ; they were indeed infallible interpreters of Scriptures, but yet they never bore down their hearers merely with their authority, but expounded the Scriptures, and applied ancient prophecies to their events, and took the veil off of Moses's face, and shewed them the Gospel-state concealed under those types and figures ; they confirmed their expositions of Scripture by the force of reason, and appealed to the judgments and consciences of their hearers, whether these things were not so ; Christ commands the Jews not merely to take his own word, and to rely on his authority for the truth of what he said, but to study the Scriptures themselves ; and the Bereans are commended for this generous temper of mind, that they were more noble than those of Thessalonica, for they daily searched the Scriptures to see whether the doctrines the Apostles preached were to be found there or not. Now I think no Church can pretend to be more infallible than Christ and his Apostles, and therefore, certainly ought not to assume more to themselves than they did ; and if the Church of Rome, or any other Church, will convince us of the truth of their expositions of Scripture, as Christ and his Apostles convinced their hearers, that is, by enlightening our understandings, and convincing our judgments by proper arguments, we will gladly learn of them.

This course the primitive Christians took, as is evident in all the writings of the ancient Fathers against Jews and heretics ; they argue from the Scriptures themselves, to prove what the sense of Scripture is : they appeal indeed sometimes to the sense of the catholic Church, not as an infallible judge of Scripture, but as the best witnesses of the Apostolical doctrine : thus Tertullian argues against heretics, in his book *De Præscriptionibus* ; but when they reason about the sense of Scripture, they never direct us to any infallible judge, but use such arguments as they think proper to convince gainsayers.

Nay, this is the way which was observed in all the ancient Councils ; the bishops of the Church met together for common council and advice, and in matters of discipline and government, which were subject to their authority, they considered what was most for the public benefit of the Church, and

determined them by their authority, not as infallible judges, but as supreme governors of the Church. In the disputes of faith, they reason from Scripture and the sense of the catholic Church, not from their own authority; and what upon a serious debate and inquiry they found to be most agreeable to the sense of Scripture, and the doctrine of the Church of former ages, that they determined, and decreed to be received in all Churches, as the catholic faith. That this is so, is evident from all the histories of the most ancient and celebrated Councils, which any man may consult who pleases.

Now I would ask some few questions about this matter. 1. Whether these Councils took a sure and safe way to find out truth? If they did not, what reason have we to believe that they determined right? If they did, then we may use the same way which they did; for that which is a good way in one age, is so in another; and then there is no necessity of an infallible judge, to find out the sense of Scripture, because we have other certain ways of doing this; the same which all the ancient Councils observed.

2. I would know whether it be not sufficient for every Christian to receive the decrees and determinations of these Councils, upon the same reason and authority which moved the Fathers assembled in Council to make these decrees? Whether, for instance, we must not believe the eternal Godhead of Christ, and that he is of the same substance with his Father, for the same reasons for which the Nicene Fathers believed this, and required all Christians to believe it? If we must, then Scripture, and the sense of the catholic Church, not the authority of a General Council, or any infallible judge, is the reason of our faith: for the Nicene Fathers, who were the first that met in a General Council, could not believe this upon the authority of any other General Council, much less upon their own authority; unless we will say, that they first decreed this, then believed it, because they themselves decreed it. If Scripture, and the sense of the catholic Church, antecedently to the determinations of a General Council, or any other pretended infallible judge, be not a sufficient foundation for our faith, then the whole Christian world, before the Council of Nice, which was the first General Council, had no sufficient foundation for their faith; for there was no particular bishop, or Church, in those days, which pretended to be the infallible interpreter of Scriptures. We Protestants have the same way to understand the Scriptures, have the

same reason and foundation of our faith, which the Nicene Fathers themselves had, or which any Christian could have, before there was any General Council, and if the Church of Rome do not think this enough we cannot help that, we are abundantly satisfied with it.

The authority of a General Council in those days was deservedly sacred and venerable, not as an infallible judge, which they never pretended to, but as the most certain means they could possibly have to understand what was, and in all ages had been, the received doctrine of the catholic Church. They met together, not to make new articles of faith, which no Council in the world ever had any authority to do, but to declare what was the truly ancient and Apostolic faith; and to put it into such words as might plainly express the catholic sense, and meet with the distempers of that age.

For this end, grave and reverend bishops assembled from all parts of the Christian world, not merely to give their private opinions of things, but to declare what was the received doctrine of those Churches over which they presided; and I know no better argument of an Apostolic tradition, than the consent of all Churches, as remote from each other as east and west, which were planted by several Apostles, and differed very much from each other, in some external rites and usages, but yet all agreed in the same faith: And this is the true authority of those ancient Councils, that they were most likely to understand the true sense of Scripture, and of the catholic Church. This is the Protestant resolution of faith, and the Nicene Fathers themselves had no other way, nor pretended to any other.

Nay, the Church of Rome herself, as much as she talks of infallibility, makes very little use of it. She has never given us an infallible comment on Scripture, but suffers her doctors to write as fallible comments, and in many things as contrary to each other, as any Protestant divines do: and I cannot imagine what good infallibility does, if an infallible Church has no better means of understanding Scripture, than the comments of fallible men; that is, no better means than every fallible Church has; for no man can understand the Scripture ever the better for the Church's being infallible, unless this infallible Church improve the glorious talent of infallibility in expounding Scripture; which she has not done to this day, and I believe never will.

Indeed it is apparent, that infallibility, as it is pretended to by

the Church of Rome, can be of no use, either in the resolution of faith, or in confuting heretics who deny this infallibility ; and then I cannot imagine what it is good for, but to multiply disputes, instead of ending them.

As for the resolution of faith ; suppose I ask a papist, Why he believes such articles, as the divinity of Christ, or the resurrection of the dead, to be contained in Scripture ? •If he answers, as he must do, Because he is taught so by the Church, which is infallible : my next question is, How he knows the Church to be infallible ? If he says he learns this from Scripture, I ask him how he comes to understand the Scripture, and how he knows that this is the sense of it ? If he knows this by the infallible interpretation of the Church, then he runs round in a circle, and knows the Scripture by the Church, and the Church by the Scripture, as I observed before ; if he can find out the Church's infallibility by the Scripture, without the help of an infallible judge, then it seems the Scripture is to be understood without the infallible interpretation of the Church ; and if men can find out infallibility in Scripture without the Church, I am confident they may find out any thing else in Scripture as well, without the Church's infallibility : for there is no article of our Creed so hard to be found there, as the Church's infallibility is. But however that be, after all this boast of infallibility, a Papist has no more infallible foundation for his faith, than a Protestant has, nor half so much. We believe the articles of the Christian faith, because we find them plainly taught in Scripture, and universally received as the sense of Scripture by the catholic Church in the best and purest ages of it : a Papist believes the Church to be infallible, because he thinks he finds it in Scripture, though the catholic Church for many ages never found it there, and the greater part of the Christian Church to this day, cannot find it there : now if they will but allow, that a Protestant (though a poor fallible creature) may reason about the sense of Scripture, as well as a Papist, and that the evidence of reason is the same to both ; then we Protestants stand upon as firm ground as the Papists here, and are at least as certain of all those doctrines of faith, which we find in the Scripture, and are ready to prove by it, as they are of their Church's infallibility ; but then we have an additional security, that we expound the Scriptures right, which they want, and that is, the doctrine and practice of the primitive Church, which confirms all the articles of our faith, and rules of worship and discipline, but gives not the

least intimation, that the Pope or Church of Rome was thought infallible by them ; and if the primitive Church was ignorant of this, which is the best witness of Apostolical tradition, it is most probable, that no such thing is contained in Scripture, though some mercenary flatterers of the Pope have endeavoured to persuade the world that they found it there.

So that we have a greater assurance of all the articles of our religion, from Scripture and catholic tradition, than a Papist can have of the Church's infallibility ; and yet he can have no greater assurance of any other doctrines of religion, which he believes upon the Church's infallibility, than he has of infallibility itself. So that in the last resolution of faith, the Protestant has much the advantage of the Papist ; for the Protestant resolves his faith into the authority of the Scriptures, expounded by the doctrine and practice of the primitive Church, the Papist resolves his into the infallibility of the Church, which he finds out only by expounding Scripture by a private spirit, without the authority of any Church, but that whose authority is under dispute.

And as the doctrine of infallibility is of no use in the last resolution of faith, so it is wholly useless in disputing with such heretics as we are, who deny infallibility : for it is a vain thing to attempt to impose any absurd, or groundless, and uncatholic doctrines upon us, by the Church's infallible authority, who believe there is not such infallible judge ; but are resolved to trust our own eyes, and to adhere to Scripture and the catholic faith of the primitive Church in these matters.

And therefore, the great advocates for the Church of Rome, are forced to take the same course in confuting heresies, as they call them, that we do : they allege the authority of Scripture, the authority of Fathers and Councils, to justify their innovations, and here we willingly join issue with them, and are ready to prove, that Scripture and all true antiquity is on our side ; and this has been often and unanswerably proved by the learned patrons of the Reformation.

But there are some very material things to be observed from hence, for our present purpose. For either they think this a good way to prove what they intend, and to convince gain-sayers by the authority of Scripture, and primitive antiquity, or they do not. If they do not think this a good way, to what purpose are there so many volumes of controversy written ? Why do they produce Scripture, and Fathers, and Councils, to justify the usurpations of their Church, and those

new additions they have made to the Christian faith and worship? If this be not a good way to convince a heretic, why do they give themselves and us such an impertinent trouble?

If this be a good way, then we are in a good way already ; we take that very way for our satisfaction, which by their own confession and practice, is a very proper means for the conviction of heretics, and to discover the truth ; and after the most diligent inquiries we can make, we are satisfied that the truth is on our side.

If the authority of Scripture signify any thing in this matter, then it seems, heretics, who reject the authority of an infallible judge, may understand Scripture without an infallible interpreter, by the exercise of reason and judgment in studying it ; otherwise why do they pretend to expound Scripture to us, and to convince us by reason and argument, what the true sense of Scripture is?

If the authority of the primitive Church, and first Christian writers, be considerable (as they acknowledge it is, by their appeals to them), then at least, the present Pope or Church, is not the sole infallible judge of controversies ; unless they will say that we must not judge of the doctrine or practice of the primitive Church, by ancient records (and then Baronius's Annals are worth nothing), but by the judgment and practice of the present Church.

The sum is this : there is great reason to suspect, that the Church of Rome herself does not believe her own infallibility, no more than we Protestants do ; for if she does, she ought not to suffer her doctors to dispute with heretics, from any other topic but her own authority ; when they vie reasons and arguments with us, and dispute from Scripture and antiquity, they appeal from the infallibility of the present Church, to every man's private reason and judgment, as much as any Protestant does ; and if the articles of the Christian faith may be established by Scripture and antiquity, without an infallible judge, as they suppose they may be, by their frequent attempts to do it ; this plainly overthrows the necessity of an infallible judge. In a word, not to take notice now how weak and groundless this pretence of infallibility is, it is evident that it is a very useless doctrine ; for those who believe the Church's infallibility, have no greater assurance of their faith, than we have, who do not believe it : and those who do not believe the Church's infallibility, can never be confuted by it. So that it

can neither establish any man's faith, nor confute any heresies ; that is, it is of no use at all.

The Church of England reverences the authority of the primitive Church, as the best witness of the Apostolical faith and practice, but yet resolves her faith at last into the authority of the Scriptures. She receives nothing for an article of faith, which she does not find plainly enough taught in Scripture, but it is a great confirmation of her interpretation of Scripture, that the primitive Church owned the same doctrines which she does ; and she looks upon it as a just prejudice against any expositions of Scripture, if they contradict the common faith of the first Christians : and therefore, when the words of Scripture are fairly capable of different senses, she chooses that sense which is most agreeable with the catholic faith, and practice of the primitive Church ; but should any doctrines be imposed upon her, as articles of faith, which are no where to be found in Scripture, or which are plainly contrary to it (as the new Trent Creed is), whatever pretence there be for the antiquity of such doctrines, she utterly rejects them ; she will not put out her own eyes to follow any other guide ; and thanks be to God, she needs not reject any truly catholic doctrine in this way. We still retain the faith of the primitive Church, and are greatly confirmed in it, from that admirable consent there is between the Scriptures, as expounded by us, and that faith which was anciently owned and received by all Christians.

Having thus shewn in what sense the Church is the interpreter of Scripture, I proceed now to the second thing contained in this paper, that this Church must be known to be the true Church, by its continual visible succession from Christ till our days. Now these few words contain a great many, and very great mistakes. The subject of the inquiry is, how we may find out such a Church, whose word we may safely take for the true sense and meaning of Scripture.

Now, 1. The author of this paper, whether ignorantly or designedly, I know not, alters the state of the question, and instead of a Church, which is an unerring and infallible interpreter of Scripture, which would be very well worth finding, he tells us how we may know a true Church ; now I take a true Church, and an infallible interpreter of Scripture, to be very different things. A Church may be guilty of schism and heresy, and yet may be a true Church, though not a sound, orthodox, and catholic Church : for a true Church is such a

Church as has all things necessary, and essential to the being and constitution of a Church : this a Church may have, and superadd other things which are destructive of the Christian faith, and very dangerous and fatal mistakes ; as we believe, and are able to prove the Church of Rome has done : and yet we acknowledge her a true Church, because she retains the true Christian faith, though miserably corrupted by additions of her own ; as a man is a true man, though he be sick of a mortal disease. Now if a true Church may corrupt the Christian faith, we have no reason to rely on the authority of every true Church, for the true sense and meaning of Scripture.

2. Let us suppose, that by a true Church he means an infallible Church, whose authority we may safely rely on in expounding Scriptures ; this Church, he says, is to be known by a continual visible succession from Christ till our days : now if this visible uninterrupted succession be the mark of such a true Church, as is an infallible interpreter of Scripture ; then, 1. The Greek Church is an infallible interpreter of Scripture ; for she has as visible and uninterrupted a succession from Christ and his Apostles to this day, as the Church of Rome has ; and so we have two infallible Churches (not to instance in any more at present, who have as good a succession as either of them) which are directly opposite to each other ; and what shall we do in this case ? Must we believe contradictions, or must we disbelieve infallible Churches ?

2. If a visible succession from Christ and his Apostles makes any Church an infallible interpreter of Scripture, then all the Churches which were planted by the Apostles were infallible. All the Churches which were planted by the Apostles have an equally visible succession from Christ ; those Churches which were planted by the Apostles, may be presumed as infallible while the Apostles were present with them, as they were afterwards ; and those Churches which succeeded these apostolical Churches, at the distance of an age or two, may be supposed as infallible as any Church of this age is : for if a visible succession from Christ makes a Church infallible, why should not a succession of a hundred or two hundred years, make them as infallible as a succession of sixteen hundred years, unless they think that infallibility increases with the age of the Church, which I could wish true, but we see very little sign of it. Now according to these principles, all the Churches which were planted by the Apostles, and have a continual visible succession from apostolical Churches, through all ages, since the

time of the Apostles, must be infallible: for if a continual visible succession confers infallibility, and is the mark whereby we must know it, then every Church which ever had, or has to this day this visible succession, must have infallibility also, which, it seems, is entailed on succession. And thus we have found out a world of infallibility, and it is wonderful how any apostolical Church came to be overrun with so many errors and heresies, and to grow so corrupt and degenerate, as to provoke God to root them up; if every apostolical Church was infallible, I cannot imagine how whole Churches, which visibly succeeded the Apostles, should be infected with heresy: for if infallibility itself will not secure a Church from heresy, the Lord have mercy upon us.

3. This mark he gives how to find out such a true Church as is an infallible interpreter of Scripture, *viz.* a continual visible succession from Christ till this day, includes another great mistake; for it supposes, that there is some Church now in being, on whose authority we must rely for the sense of Scripture; for otherwise there can be no use of a visible succession to this day, in this controversy: if, as I have already proved at large, we must rely only on the authority of the primitive Church, not of the Church of this present age, for the sense of Scripture, and that not as an infallible judge, but as the most authentic witness of the Apostolical doctrine and practice, then we cannot find out this Church by a visible succession to this day, but by examining the ancient records of the primitive Church, where we shall find what the faith and practice of the Church in those days was, which is the safest rule to guide us in the exposition of Scripture. Though there were no Church in the world at this day, which could prove a continual visible succession from Christ and his Apostles, yet while we have the Scriptures, and the records of the primitive Church, we have very sufficient means for the understanding the true meaning of Scripture: so that of whatever use this talk of a continual visible succession may be in other cases, it is wholly impertinent in this. A Church which cannot prove such a continual visible succession, which was not founded by any Apostle, or apostolical men, or has lost the memory or records of its first plantation, may yet have very certain means of knowing the true sense of Scripture, from the Scripture itself, and the doctrine and practice of apostolical and primitive Churches; and a Church which has the most visible uninterrupted succession from Christ and his

Apostles, may be so far from being an infallible interpreter of Scripture, that she may be very corrupt and erroneous herself, if she forsake the apostolical tradition contained in the writings of the New Testament, and expounded by the catholic faith and practice of the first Churches; as we know the Church of Rome has done; which is so far from being an infallible Church, that we believe her to be the most corrupt Church in the world.

And thus, I think, we are prepared to venture upon the last clause of this Paper, wherein the whole force of the argument, such as it is, is turned upon the poor Protestant Churches. But I doubt (says the author of this paper), whether or no the Protestant Church can make out this continual visible succession, and desire to be informed. The sting of which argument lies in this, that we Protestants have no certain way of knowing the true sense and meaning of Scripture, because we cannot prove the continual visible succession of our Church, from Christ unto this day; and therefore we ought to go over to the Church of Rome, who has this visible succession, and receive all her dictates as infallible oracles. But for answer to this, consider,

1. That suppose the Protestant Church could not make out such a continual visible succession, yet we may understand the Scriptures very well without it, and need not go to the Church of Rome to expound Scripture for us, as I have already shewn at large. Had he proved that we had been no Church, for want of a visible succession of Church officers, or that our religion were a novelty, which was never heard of in the world before Luther, this had been something more to the purpose; but to pretend that we cannot understand the Scriptures, for want of a visible succession, is such a loose and inconsequent way of reasoning as a poor fallible Protestant would be ashamed of.

2. But pray, why cannot the Protestant Church of England prove her continual visible succession from Christ till this day, as well as the Church of Rome? Here was a Christian Church planted in this nation, as very good historians say, as early as at Rome, and it has continued here ever since to this day: when Austin the monk came over to England, he found here a company of resolute British bishops and monks, who would not submit to the usurpations of Rome, and the English and British Churches under several changes and alterations have continued to this day, with a visible succession of Christian

bishops, and what better succession can Rome shew than this?

I suppose no Roman Catholic will disown the succession of the Church of England, till the Reformation, and, I pray, how came we to lose our succession then? Did the reformation of those abuses and corruptions, which had crept into the Church, unchurch us? Just as much as a man ceases to be the same man, when he is cured of some mortal disease: did not the Church of England consist of the same persons, before the Reformation and after? A great many indeed, disowned the Reformation; but were not all those persons, who were so active and zealous in the Reformation, formerly of the Roman communion? and did they lose their succession too, when they became Reformers? When a Church consists of the same bishops, priests, and people, which she had before, though she have not all the same that she had; when she retains the same ancient Catholic and Apostolic faith, which she did before, only renounces some errors and innovations, which she owned before, how does this forfeit her succession? The Church of England is the very same Church now, since the Reformation, which she was before, and therefore, has the very same succession, though not the same errors, to this day, that ever she had; and that, I think, is as good a succession as the Church of Rome has.

There are but two things to be considered in the case of succession: either a succession of Church officers, or a succession of the faith and doctrines of the Church.

1. As for a succession of Church officers, we have the same that the Church of Rome has. Those English bishops who embraced the Reformation, received their orders in the communion of the Church of Rome, and therefore, they are as good orders as any are in the Church of Rome; and these were the persons who consecrated other bishops, and so in succession to this day. For as for the story of the Nag's-Head ordination, that is so transparent a forgery, invented many years after to reproach the Reformation, that I presume no sober Roman Catholic will insist on it.

But we are heretics and schismatics, and this forfeits our orders, and our succession together. But, 1. This charge ought first to be proved against us, that we are heretics and schismatics; we deny and abhor both the name and thing; and if we be not heretics and schismatics, as we are sure we are not, and as the Church of Rome can never prove us to

be, then, according to their own confession, our orders must be good.

2. However, be we heretics, or schismatics, or whatever they please to call us, how does this destroy our orders and succession? The catholic Church would not allow in former ages, that heresy or schism destroyed the validity of orders. St. Jerome disputes against this at large, in his book *Contra Luciferianos*. And St. Augustin allows the Donatists' bishops to have valid orders, though they were schismatics, and therefore that the sacraments administered by them were valid. And indeed, if heresy will destroy orders and succession, the Church of Rome will be as much to seek for their orders and succession as we are, which, by their own confession, have had several heretical Popes, and nobody knows how many bishops ordained by them.

2. As for succession of doctrine, which is as considerable to the full as succession of orders, the great articles of our faith are not only plainly contained in Scripture, but have been delivered down to us, through all ages of the Church, by an uninterrupted succession.

The Church of Rome herself, in her greatest degeneracy, did own all that we do in pure matters of faith: when we reformed the Church, we did not make a new religion, but only separated the old faith from new and corrupt additions; and therefore, the quarrel of the Church of Rome with us, is not that we believe anything which they do not believe, but that we do not believe all that they would have us.

The doctrine of the Church of England is truly primitive and catholic, taught by Christ and his Apostles, owned by the primitive Church, and (excepting the disputes between the Latin and Greek Church, about the *Filioque*, or the Holy Spirit's proceeding from the Father and the Son) received by all catholic Churches to this day; which is as complete and perfect succession, as any doctrine can have; therefore, when the Church of Rome asks us, Where was our religion before Luther? We tell them it was all the world over, all catholic Churches believed what we do, though we do not believe all that they do, they themselves did, and do to this day, own our Creeds and articles of faith, excepting such of them as are directly opposed to their innovations.

So that we are on a sure foundation, our faith has been received in the catholic Church in all ages. But now the Church of Rome cannot shew such a succession for her new

doctrines and articles of faith, which were unknown to the primitive Church for many ages, which were rejected by many flourishing Churches, since the first appearance of them, which never had a quiet possession in her own communion, and were never formed into articles of faith, till the packed Conventicle of Trent.

This, I think, is a sufficient answer to this Paper, and it pities me to see so many well-meaning persons abused with such transparent sophistry.

BOOK II.

THE PROTESTANT RULE OF FAITH, EXPLAINED AND VINDICATED, UPON THE HEAD OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

THE JUDGMENT OF
PRIVATE DISCRETION IN MATTERS OF RELIGION
DEFENDED :

*In a Sermon on 1 Thess. v. 21, preached at St. Paul's, Covent Garden,
Feb. 23, 1686.*

TO THE READER.

NOTHING concerns us so much as the salvation of our souls, and, in order to that, the choice of our religion. Here it well becomes us to use great care, and strictly to examine things. This we do in matters of less moment; when we purchase, and when we trade; when we are concerned for our health, our estates, and properties. The holy Scriptures frequently put us upon this care; and the man who is diligent herein, will be able to give the best account of himself hereafter, and find the greatest satisfaction here: such a man will have steady principles, and have this comfort, that it is not by mere chance, but choice, that he is what he is. This is the way to be certain that we are in the right, which no man can be without understanding. We may be confident indeed, but can never be certain, without knowledge and diligent examination of things.

The Church of England does not require a blind obedience;

she is content her doctrines should be examined by the clearest light. Simplicity and truth seek not corners. The holy Scriptures are allowed to the people, and no means of instruction wanting among us. She does not indeed vaunt of what she hath not : she pretends not to any absolute infallibility. She is modest, and contains herself within due bounds, and withholds not from her children, either the liberty or means of examining her doctrines.

But so it is, that she suffers very greatly in the mean time : because she claims not infallibility, there are those who would infer that there is no certainty where the other is not. But this is a wild and extravagant conclusion ; for the certainty of a thing does not depend upon the infallibility of a person, but ariseth from the evidence or clear grounds which evict its truth. It does not follow, that because I am fallible, that I can be certain of nothing ; or that because I am liable to err, I can never be sure I am in the right ; or that because I am ignorant of some things, therefore I know nothing at all.

And yet we find it frequently pretended, that Protestants want certainty, and that they build upon an unsure foundation ; and that because they claim not that infallibility which others pretend to. The best way to shew the uncertainty of our faith, would be to prove that we build on false grounds ; but those men who are most forward to traduce us, have no great inclination to consider with due application the merits of our cause. Instead of this, they would have us rest upon the authority of their Church, as if the way to be more certain than we are, were for us to see with other men's eyes, and not with our own.

A man might justly expect from these men, who thus declaim against Protestants, that when they attempt to shew the uncertainty of their faith, they should at least prove the certainty of their own. It will be worth our while to see if they have any better grounds for their faith, or safer way to salvation, than we have, who examine our doctrines by the holy Scriptures. The best way to know this, will be to compare them one with another.

They say,* that the definition of the Church is our rule, where, before we can be certain, we must be sure of two things, (1.) That there is an infallible Church. (2.) That their Church is that infallible Church. We on the other hand

* Cl. Pajon Examen du livre qui porte pour titre Préjugés Legitimes, Part II.

make the holy Scriptures our rule, and believe what they teach ; and here are two things also of which we must be sure : (1.) That what God says is true. (2.) That what the Scriptures reveal is from God. This is the true state of the question between us. And now let any man consider impartially, who builds upon the surest grounds, they who build upon the veracity of God, and upon the holy Scriptures, which are by all Christians owned to be the declaration of his will ; or they who build upon a pretence that there is an infallible Church, and that their own is it. The principles on which they build, are neither so evident in themselves, nor yet so generally owned as ours ; for theirs are not so much as owned by the generality of Christians, whereas ours cannot be denied by themselves. And it will appear that our way is as easy, and more safe than theirs.

It is as easy to know what the Scripture teaches, as what their Church does : God intended it for the use of the people, and surely then he fitted it for their use. And we have great reason to believe, that God can deliver his mind as plainly as a Council, and that he did it in all things necessary to the guidance and salvation of the people for whom he wrote it. This is so very evident, that some of the Church of Rome have owned it. The authors of the Preface* to the Testament printed at Mons, declare, "That he who in the Scripture seeks nothing but his own salvation, shall find it there." And presently afterwards, speaking of some obscurity in the Scripture, they add these words : "But that which may comfort us in this obscurity is this, that, according to St. Augustin, the holy Scripture does propose to us after an easy and intelligible manner, all that is necessary for the conduct of our life : that it does explain and clear itself, in expressing clearly in some places, that which in others it expressed obscurely."

For the doctrine of the Church, it is not very easy to know it. We find at this day several representations of it from those who are all of the communion of the Roman Church. How shall the simple and unlearned man know what this doctrine is ? His curate may not be relied upon, nor can he be secure from the judgment of any private doctor. What must he do ? How shall he distinguish between the doctrine of private doctors, and that of the Church ? Must he read the

* Pref. part I. page 7. Celuy qui ne cherche dans l'Ecriture, que son salut, l'y trouvera.

ancient Canons, and Councils, and Fathers? He will find this an harder task than the searching of the Scriptures. As our way is as easy, so it is

More safe than theirs. There is danger indeed, lest our lusts and worldly interests should put a bias upon us, and turn us aside from the truth, but this lies on both sides: but then on our side the great danger is this, lest we mistake the sense of the holy Scripture; here is the great fear. But then on the other side, they who govern themselves by the authority of the Church, are under a double danger: (1.) Lest they take that Church for infallible, which is not. (2.) Lest they take that for the doctrine of this Church, which indeed is not her doctrine. We are sure that the Scriptures are God's word, and were written for our instruction, and that upon our diligent search into them, and humble addresses to God, we shall find salvation, if we seek nothing more.

For the infallibility of the Church, which is so much talked of, it must be made good before I can be obliged to receive it; and when it is I shall readily submit to it. But in the mean time I find great difficulties attending upon that doctrine, both as to the subject of that infallibility, as to the thing itself, and as to the ground on which it stands.

As to the subject of it, I find our adversaries are not as yet agreed where it is to be placed, and therefore, I know not where to find it: and then it is all one as if there was no such thing at all. That which I cannot come at, will stand me in no stead. Let our adversaries tell us in whom it is lodged: is it in the Bishop of Rome? Or is it in him and the Conclave? Or in him and a General Council? Or is it in a Council without him? If in a Council, must that be œcumenical only; or does it reside in national and provincial also?

As to the infallibility itself, I would be informed how far it reacheth. Does it extend to questions of fact, as well as of law and right? Does it take in not only necessary things, but also things that are of less moment? Is this Church infallible not only in her conclusions, but in the premises too from whence those conclusions are drawn? Does this infallibility require, that the question should be examined, before the matter be decided, or not? Is it a natural gift, or is it by grace? By immediate revelation or not? Let us suppose it in a General Council; yet in this case I would know, whether or not this Council will be infallible in their decisions, however things are carried? Are there no rules the Council is to go

by? Must not questions be strictly examined, and the suffrages be free, and the Council be canonically indicted? Or will the Council be infallible, though it observe none of these rules and forms? Let them tell us what these forms are that are necessary, and let them after this make it appear that they have been duly observed; or let them say, if any form or rule be needful, or not, how comes it to pass, that the divines in a General Council have differed from one another? How comes it that one Council hath determined against another? Why are some of these Councils in part received, and in part rejected? What sure marks have we to distinguish one from another? What assurance can we give, that the major part is always the better, and have used the greatest care?

For the grounds and proofs of this infallibility, I desire to see those that are solid and weighty, such as are evident and clear, and will render me infallibly certain of the thing. This had need be well proved, it not being self-evident. If I must believe the Church in all other things, yet it is fit this should be strongly proved. These proofs must be taken from the holy Scriptures, and not from the authority of the Church which lays claims to it. And then they must be such proofs as determine it to that very Church, and as do evidently prove that such an infallibility does belong to it as she pretends to.

Till these things are cleared, I know not any better advice I can give the reader, than to continue stedfast in the communion of our Church, as the safest way to heaven. For though we ought not to want charity for others, yet we are bound in conscience (and as we will answer it at the great day) to choose wisely, and to be constant to such a choice. There are some things controverted between us and the Church of Rome, wherein we are manifestly of the safer side: to worship no image hath no danger, nor is there any hazard in receiving the sacrament in both kinds. It were easy to give other instances in which we are on the safer side.

In the mean time, let it be our care to live up to our principles, and we shall not miscarry. The best Church is no security to the careless and the profane. We shall know the will of God best, when we do it with great care. It is not enough that we "prove all things," we must also "hold fast that which is good."

1 THESS. V. 21.

"PROVE ALL THINGS, HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

IN these words the Apostle commends to those, to whom he writes, two things, the one in order to the other.

First, That they should "prove all things."

Secondly, That they shall "hold fast that which is good."

I begin with the first, "Prove all things."

And here I think myself obliged, before I proceed any farther, to consider, (1.) The persons to whom the advice is given; and (2.) The importance of the advice itself.

1. The persons to whom this advice is given, *viz.* to the Church of the Thessalonians * Not to the bishops and governors of the Church only, but to the people also. This appears from the words (chap. v. 12.) "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." It cannot be supposed, that St. Paul does here direct himself to the head, and not unto the members. He does generally address himself to the Church in the most diffusive sense of that word: *e.g.* "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints."† And, "Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ the Lord."‡ Again, "Unto the Church of God which is in Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia." Again, "Unto the Church of Galatia."§ And, "To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus."|| And where the bishops and other ministers of the Church are named, the body of the faithful are not forgotten. Thus "To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."¶ Again, "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, which are at Colosse." And, "To the Church of the Thessalonians."** And thus also St. James, "To the twelve tribes scattered abroad."†† Thus St. Peter, "To the strangers scattered," &c.‡‡ And, "To them that have obtained like precious faith with us."§§ And St. John (as a learned man hath observed), may well be supposed

* Ch. i. ver. 1.

† Rom. i. 7.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 2. 2 Cor. i. 1.

§ Gal. i. 2.

|| Eph. i. 1.

¶ Phil. i. 1. Colos. i. 2.

** 1 Thess. i. 1. 2 Thess. i. 1.

†† James i. 1.

‡‡ 1 Pet. i. 1.

§§ 2 Pet. i. 1.

to direct that Epistle to the Church, or whole body of Christians, which according to our version, is said to be directed to the elect Lady. St. Jude directs his "To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called."* St. Paul, where he gives laws about the officers and government of the Church, directs his Epistles to the governors only, as in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus; otherwise he directs, as here, to the whole body of Christians.

2. I consider the importance of the advice, "Prove all things" The Greek word, which we render *prove*, signifies to examine the truth or goodness of a thing; and to discern the difference between one thing and another.† It signifies to try and examine, and sometimes (as the result of such trial) to approve.

It hath in the New Testament, a particular reference to matters of religion:‡ these things deserve examining, and there are about religion many dangerous errors which want not the vogue and colour of truth: We are required "to try the spirits,"§ and warned not to believe every spirit.

We are required to examine and try the truth and goodness of things, yea of "all things,"|| and not to take them upon trust: and this precept is subjoined to that, "despise not prophesying;" i. e. the preaching of the word, as may be collected from the Apostle's words elsewhere.

St. Paul doth frequently put us in mind to reverence the ministers of religion,¶ and tells us how they are to be esteemed; he requires us in this chapter, "to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake," and bids us not despise prophesyings, and yet even to this he adds, "prove all things," &c. whence I raise this doctrine or proposition:

That it is the duty of Christian people to examine the grounds of their religion and faith, and not to take them upon trust.

For the better speaking to it, I shall,

First, Shew how this proposition is to be understood.

Secondly, I shall prove the truth of it.

Thirdly, I shall answer the objections that may be brought against it.

Fourthly, I shall make some use and application of the whole.

1. I shall shew how this proposition is to be understood: And that I shall do in the following particulars.

* Jude, ver. 1.

† Luke xii. 56. chap. xiv. 19. Rom. ii. 18. 1 Cor. iii. 13. xi. 27. xvi. 3.

‡ Rom. ii. 18. xii. 2. Eph. v. 10. Philip. i. 10.

§ 1 John iv. 1.

|| 1 Cor. xiv. 3. iv. 5.

¶ ¶ Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Cor. iv. 1. 2 Cor. v. 20.

1. What I plead for is a judgment of discretion, and not of jurisdiction and direction, which belongs to our superiors. It is here as in the laws of a kingdom. The people are obliged to know and keep them. It is the duty and the interest of every man, to know so much of them as concerns his life and property, and the discharging his duty to his prince and country. But then the power of making these laws lies in his prince or governors; and the learned in the law are only fit to direct and guide men in the matters of doubt and question. And so it is in religion. It does not belong to every private man to be a preacher and interpreter of Holy Writ, much less hath he anything to do to make laws for other men. But the private man hath a soul to save, and in order thereunto, is bound to inform himself in matters of faith, and those things which tend to the regulating his life and conversation.* We do not receive the people as judges of controversies, and doubtful disputations; yet think them concerned in religion in the mean time. For matters of dispute and question the priests' lips are to preserve knowledge. Here it becomes private men to be modest, and to preserve a great reverence for their spiritual guides. But there is a great deal of difference between asking the way, when we are at a stand, and pulling out our eyes and leaving ourselves wholly to be led by another. We may use our own eyes and our guides too.

2. It is likewise a judgment of private discretion which I plead for. It is not fit that a private man should judge for himself and his brother too. His conscience is not to be the common standard and measure of other men's. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."† Every man ought to have this liberty to himself, and to be content therewith, and not to censure his brother.

3. The practice of private men must (notwithstanding this liberty) be governed by the laws of their just superiors. And nothing can excuse them from an active obedience, but where their governors command what God hath forbid, or forbid what he hath commanded.

And this determination of our practice (especially in matters of order and discipline, of which I would be chiefly understood) is very consistent with that judgment of discretion which I am now pleading for. Indeed, if the thing commanded be evil, I must obey God rather than man; but if it be not, I sin against God when I disobey my superiors. A private man is not

* Rom. xiv. 1.

† Rom. xiv. 5.

judge of what is convenient, most decent and orderly, but ought to judge between good and evil, lawful and unlawful, true and false. Our doctrine does not give men a liberty to do what they list, when it permits them a judgment of discretion; we do not pull out the people's eyes, nor yet allow them to break hedges, and throw open enclosures, and ramble wherever they list.

II. I shall prove the truth of this proposition, and shew that men are not to take their religion upon trust; that they ought to examine their religion, to try the doctrines which they are taught, whether true or false, revealed by God or not: and also to consider, whether what is enjoined them be lawful or not. And to this purpose I desire you to consider,

1. That the Scripture teacheth us this doctrine. We are here commanded to "prove all things;" and our Saviour bids his followers "take heed that no man deceive them."* Christ allows no man a tyranny over the consciences of men, nor would St. Peter have it usurped, nor did the Apostles themselves practise it. St. Paul declares himself not to be a lord over their faith, but an helper of their joy.† Christ is our Master and great Shepherd. His ministers are but stewards and ambassadors, and are no farther imitable than they follow Christ.

Our Saviour calls upon his followers to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees," and to "search the Scriptures."‡ And we are required to "try the spirits," and not to believe an Apostle or an Angel that should preach any other Gospel.

God gave his law for our direction: and we are assured that the Scripture is sufficient to "render the man of God wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ."§ And those men are commended who searched the Scriptures, and examined the doctrine of the primitive preachers by them.

"If the blind lead the blind (says Christ), both shall fall into the ditch."|| Men will not be excused because they have been misled by their guides, and believed as their Church believed. Ezekiel¶ tells us, that where the people are not warned, they shall die in their iniquity. Religion is every man's concernment, and every man is obliged to take care of his soul, and not

* Matth. xxiv. 4. chap. xxiii. 10. 1 Pet. v.

† 2 Cor. i. 24. Heb. xiii. 20. 1 Cor. xi. 1.

‡ Matth. xvi. 6. John v. 39. 1 John iv. 1. Gal. i.

§ Deut. iv. Psal. i. 2 Tim. iii. 15. Luke xvi. Acts xvii. 11.

|| Matth. xv. 14.

¶ Ezek. iii. 17, 18.

blindly to give himself up to him that pretends to be an infallible guide.

“Be ready always (says St. Peter) to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.”* We must then judge of the grounds of our faith, and not take it upon trust.

2. I shall represent to you (for the better confirming my proposition) the just exceptions against the contrary belief; *viz.* That the people are bound to lay aside their own discretion, and entirely to give themselves up (without examining) to be led as their guides please. I shall shew the dangerous consequences, the inconsistency and vanity, the impiety and unreasonableness of this principle; and that in the following particulars.

(1.) This principle is of the most dangerous consequence.

It would justify the idolatry of the Israelites, which was at any time introduced upon them by their high priests or false prophets, or evil kings. We read of their sacrificing in high places, their worship of the golden calf, and the calves of Dan and Bethel, of their brazen serpent, and their false gods.† It was not a just excuse for them, that the golden calf was made by Aaron.‡ They were not without blame for offering upon that altar, which resembled that which was at Damascus, because Uriah their high priest set it up, and Ahaz their king commanded the use of it. But we know that God was angry with them when they followed their blind guides, which he would not have been had they done well in it.

This principle would have justified the Jews in rejecting our Saviour. For who could blame them for doing that which their high priest and Sanhedrim, their priests and elders had done before? It is true, he wrought many miracles: but to this they might reply, that their Church did not believe them effected by the power of God. Indeed Jesus appeals often to the Scripture; but according to this principle, to this they might have pleaded, that it was not for private men to understand Scripture, and that their Church did understand it otherwise. They might have pleaded moreover, that the interpreting of Scripture did not belong to private men as they were, and that they were to be governed by tradition, or the oral law, and not by the written one only: that they had among them an high priest and Sanhedrim, scribes, or men learned in the law and traditions, which latter they received with equal reverence

* 1 Pet. iii. 15.

† 2 Kings xviii. 4.

‡ Exod. xxxii. 4.

with the written word. "Have any of the rulers and the Pharisees believed on him?"* say they. They were so far from it, that they agreed, "that he who confessed him to be the Christ,† should be put out of the synagogue." Would such pretences, think ye, have served the turn of the Jews? By no means. They ought to have read the Scriptures, to which Jesus appealed, to have compared events with prophecies. This our Lord puts them upon, and it was at once their duty and interest to have done it.‡ They are commended who took this course.

This principle might, afterwards, have justified the Jews, in their rejecting the Christian doctrine, and the Apostles and first preachers thereof. The Jews might have pleaded against the Apostles many things, *e. g.* The undoubted antiquity of the Jewish Church, and novelty of the Christian doctrine: the necessity of giving themselves up to the conduct of their priests, whose lips were to preserve knowledge, and they were to seek the law at their mouth: they might have pleaded, that they were in the safest way to salvation: for though they denied the possibility of it to the Christians, yet Jesus himself owned that salvation was of the Jews. They might have urged the xviith of Deuteronomy, to prove the infallibility of their Church, with a far greater show than ever "thou art Peter," &c. was produced to prove that of the bishop of Rome. It being expressly required (Deut. xvii. 8, 10.) that in matters of controversy men should abide by the sentence of the law pronounced by the priest, or judge of that time; whereas no such thing is said of the Bishop of Rome in the New Testament.

This principle would effectually have hindered the propagation of the Christian religion among the Gentile or Pagan part of the world. They had their priests and high priests too, as well as the Jews; they had antiquity to plead, and great success and prosperity under their way of worship. *Sequendi sunt nobis parentes, qui feliciter sequuti sunt suos*, saith Symmachus. If this principle might be allowed, there could be no way left to spread the faith among them.

This one principle, wherever admitted, would have put a perpetual bar to the conversion of Jews and infidels to the Christian faith. For what method can we take to bring them over, if we cannot convince them that we are in the right, and they in the wrong? And how can they be made sensible of

* John vii. 48. † John ix. 22. ‡ John v. 39, 45, 46, 47. Acts xvii. 11.
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this, if we allow them not the liberty of judging? And sure if they be fit to judge of the whole matter, they are not unfit to judge of the severals. If we allow them the liberty to judge of Christianity before they embrace it, it is not reasonable to deny them a judgment of discretion when they are received into the Christian faith.

This principle admitted, would have excused the people that should have continued in Arianism, when the bishops and priests, and generally the whole Church was infected with it. The Arians once filled the Church, called themselves orthodox and catholics, and others heretics. According to this principle the people ought to have continued thus always; for they were to be governed by their bishops and priests: and why should they think themselves obliged to hearken to what you had to offer from Scripture, or reason, or the Council of Nice, when it was against the sense of the present Church?

(2.) This principle, not being self-evident, is inconsistent, and manifestly destroys itself. For it is liable to be examined, and ought to be strictly examined, because very much depends upon it. If it may be examined by the people, they who maintain it have lost their question. For then the people are not obliged to despoil themselves of their faculties and wiser powers, but may judge in matters of religion, this being of the most principal concernment of all. This ought not to be taken upon trust, because their salvation depends upon it. If this chance to be false, they may blindly give themselves up to a guide who may lead them to the regions of darkness.

(3.) Supposing there were any truth in this principle, yet it would be of no use to us, unless we were also directed to the Church and guides, to whom we are to surrender ourselves. Supposing we were bound to believe as the Church believes, and blindly to follow our priests, yet if we do not know what Church is to be thus trusted, and what priests thus to be confided in, and under what profession we are to do it, we shall be at as great a loss as ever. For it cannot be supposed that it is the duty of all people, in every country, and under every profession, to do this. For Jews, Christians and infidels, cannot be all under an equal obligation. It is then to be considered to what Church this belongs. If the Church of Rome put in, she must shew a better plea than any other that may pretend, and a better than any she hath produced as yet. For antiquity, succession, miracles, amplitude, prosperity, success, &c. these are things that may be pleaded in behalf of Jews,

Pagans and infidels. They will at least severally share in these pretences. Let the pretence be what it will, before I can admit the pretender, I must judge his title good, and that will destroy the principle.

(4.) This principle invades the prerogative of God, and usurps upon his peculiar. He only hath a direct dominion over the consciences of men. "He is the one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy."* We are obliged to believe a verity, because he saith it. There must be a revelation before a Divine faith. Men have not a power to make articles of faith, or to require our assent upon presumption of such power.

(5.) Many things in religion are so plain, that a man of ordinary capacity, and competently instructed in the principles of religion, is able to judge of them: but this principle destroys that power, and supposeth men unable to judge in the plainest cases whatsoever.

From the writers of the Romish Church we hear much of the obscurity of the Scriptures. I grant that there are some things in them hard to be understood, and every man therefore is not fit to interpret them. God hath appointed an order of men to do this. He hath given "some Apostles,† and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers," not to hoodwink the people and lead them out of the way, but for the "perfecting of the saints, and for the edifying of the body of Christ," and preserving the people from the "sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive." This is the great purpose of the institution. It is for the instruction and building up of the faithful.

But our way is generally plain, and there we need no guide if we use our eyes, and mind our rule. Matters of faith as well as manners, are plainly revealed.

Such are all the articles of our most ancient Creed: they are so plainly taught in the holy Scriptures, that he who runs may read them there.

That we love God and our neighbour, are the weightier things of religion, and easy to be understood. Justice and mercy, and peaceableness, are plain. That we obey the king, be charitable to the poor, just to all men, and do as we would be done by: that we use no craft or equivocations, but be sincere in all our actions and professions, are things not hard to be understood.

* James iv. 12.

† Eph. iv. 11.

But if men should undertake to be guides to the people, and teach them rebellion, injustice, cruelty, dissembling and equivocation; to kill their king and destroy their enemies; a man of mean understanding may discern, that these are not the gifts which Christ gave unto men, but that they are a company of false people, or rather ravenous wolves. To judge of these things no man needs a guide who hath eyes in his head.

III. I shall now answer the objections which may be brought against what I have said.

Obj. 1. It is pretended that this doctrine will introduce heresies and schisms into the Church. And we are upbraided with schisms and heresies as the effect of our doctrine. On the other hand, that the people, who confide in their pastors, and believe as the Church believes, are kept in unity and at peace. To this I answer,

Ans. 1. It is a fond thing to imagine that there shall be no heresies, or schisms, and that we have found a way to prevent them. This is like the boast of a mountebank, who pretends to a panacea, or universal remedy for all diseases, who gains small credit with wise men. I grant that heresies and schisms are great evils, and that we ought to prevent them what we can. And much might be done towards it, if the ministers of religion could as easily secure the practice as inform the minds of men. But scandals or offences are great evils as well as heresies: and yet Christ tells us, "that it must needs be that offences come;" * and St. Paul tells us as plainly, "There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."† God hath foretold, "that there should come a falling away,"‡ and that some should be under "strong delusions and believe a lie." It is a vain thing to pretend a remedy against that evil, against which God himself hath provided none.

2. To believe without examining, as the present Church believes, is so far from preventing heresies, that it secures men under them without any hope of emerging. A blind obedience may as well detain men in heresy, as keep them in the faith. This principle shuts men up, and is so far from preventing the disease, that whenever men are overtaken with it, all that it does is that it hinders all remedy.

3. That the principle which I have exposed, being not self-

* Matt. xviii. 7.

† 1 Cor. xi. 19.

‡ 2 Thess. ii. 3, 11.

evident, but contestable, may well be supposed to divide men about the main question. It ought to be examined, because it does not carry its evidence along with it. And then who can tell but that the principle which is devised to unite, may chance to divide men when they go about to examine it?

4. We will suppose this principle self-evident, and that it hath been anciently and universally received (which is by no means to be granted), yet we know that it was not effectual. The Gnostics, Arians, and other heretics, did infest the primitive Church. This principle then was received in the Church from the beginning, or it was not: if it were not, it is then a new doctrine, and we are not obliged to receive it now. If it were received in the ancient Church, I would then know how heresies and schisms got into the Church? Was this principle then ineffectual, and shall it not now fail to be effectual?

Obj. 2. This doctrine which I maintain, it may be objected, will destroy that reverence which is due from the people to their pastors, and make them their judges.

Ans. 1. There is a great honour due from the people to their pastors. This cannot be denied. They are bound to pay it by all instances of regard and kindness. "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward."*

2. This honour hath its bounds and measures. It is due for the sake of their Master, and their work, and in proportion to their faithfulness and labours. "Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."† But we need not put out our eyes, that they may lead us whither they please; nor are bound to pay that honour to the servants and stewards, which is only due to their Lord and Master.

3. That we may give them all due honour, though we do not think them infallible. This the Apostle supposeth in my text. For though he had required this esteem from the people towards their pastors (ver. 13.), yet he commands them to "prove all things." We are obliged to honour our judges and civil magistrates, and may truly do it, though we do not believe every sentence and determination of theirs to be according to exact truth and equity.

For our judges in civil matters, we are obliged to sit down

* 1 Thess. v. 13. Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Cor. ix. 11. 1 Tim. v. 17. Gal. vi. 6.

† 1 Tim. v. 17.

by their sentence, when we do not think it just; we are to suffer wrong and not resist. It does not hence follow, that we must follow our spiritual guides without examining. The civil magistrate determines only our outward actions, or disposeth of some of our goods and properties (which we have power to alienate), but he does not prescribe upon our inward sense, nor touch upon our conscience as our spiritual guides do in their commands. And though we do not appeal from the civil magistrate, it cannot hence be inferred that we think him infallible.

Obj. 3. But this doctrine, some will say, will leave us at great uncertainty, and our salvation will be very contingent and hazardous, unless we be provided of an infallible guide, without whom we cannot be safe. And that God hath made a slender provision for our souls, if we be not thus provided for.

Ans. 1. We are not fit judges of what God ought to do, but ought to thank him for what he hath done. We discourse at random, and very inconsequently, when we undertake to say what is fit for God to do, and then infer he hath done what we judged fit for him to do. At this rate we may as well infer, that God hath established a sovereign umpire to decide all civil controversies about *meum* and *tuum*. For since these things divide the world, and are occasions of feuds and wars, it may be as fairly said, that this is for the interest of the world, as an infallible judge is for that of the Church. Shall we then conclude, that God hath appointed such an one, or else he had been wanting to his creatures? It is for the interest of the Church, that the members of it should be free from possibility of sinning, as well as of erring; and yet we know God hath made no such provision. An infallible guide of manners is as necessary as such a guide of controversies, and yet we cannot say there is any such. And then we have no cause to make such a conclusion.

2. That supposing it necessary there should be an infallible judge, yet this would do us no good, unless we could be infallibly sure of this infallible judge. And there are two things in this case we must be infallibly certain of, *viz.* (1.) That there is some infallible judge: (2.) Who that judge is. Both these are necessary. We must be sure of a treasure first, and then know where it lies, before we can have cause to boast of our wealth.

3. That supposing the present Church of Rome were the

infallible Church, yet the more simple sort of people would not be, for all this, at any greater certainty. For they would have another task upon them, *viz.* to inquire what is the faith, and what is the worship of this Church. And how will they do to find that out? Must they be ruled by what the ignorant and common people do? Perhaps the Church does not allow of all their practices. Or shall they be governed by their parish priest? But that priest, for what they know, may err, though a Pope or Council cannot. Shall they be governed by common consent? But there are differing customs and usages in France and Spain, and other countries; to which of these shall they adhere? Must they be taught by a Pope *ex cathedra*? But how shall they know if this be a true Pope, or whether he speak *ex cathedra* or not? Or will you send these people to the Council of Trent? Alas, it is a thing well known, that the words of that Council's decrees are sometimes general and ambiguous, and not fit to direct plain and simple people. And yet Pope Pius IV. commanded, that without his authority no man should explain them. That no man should presume "*Ullos commentarios, glossas, annotationes, scholia, ullumve omnino interpretationis genus super ipsius Concilii decretis quocunque modo edere.*" That is, "By any way to publish any commentaries, glosses, annotations, scholia, or any sort of interpretation whatsoever, upon the decrees of that Council." And this under the pain of excommunication, as appears by his bull for the confirmation of that Council. For instance: that Council tells us, that images are to be had in Churches, and to have due honour given them.* What this due honour is which they allow, how shall the simple man know? Whether it be negative or positive honour? whether he give too much or too little? whether he divide it aright between the image and the prototype? How can he know how to govern himself in this affair? Indeed the Council says afterwards, that "all superstition must be avoided." But what the superstition is, which the Council disallows, it does not define. And therefore the plain and simple man will be at a loss how to govern himself.

IV. I shall now make some application of what hath been said.

1. This serves for the reproof of those who would deprive

* Sess. 25. [Labbe, Concil. vol. 14, p. 895. Lut. Par. 1672.]

the people of that liberty which God hath given them. This is to despoil them of the great prerogative of their nature, and degrade them into a lower rank of being, which is the greatest tyranny imaginable. There is nothing so much concerns mankind, as religion and the interest of their immortal souls. We are here put upon trying or proving all things. "Believe not every spirit (says St. John),* but try the spirits whether they are of God." Christ bids the Jews "search the Scriptures." Surely then the Scriptures are not to be kept from the people: and they must be allowed their rule, when they are obliged to prove all things. If they are obliged to give a reason of their hope, they must be allowed to examine its grounds.

2. This serves for the reproof of those among ourselves, who do not use that liberty of examining which is allowed them; who neither know nor will understand: that are crafty and diligent in worldly affairs, but supinely negligent in their truest and greatest interest. Too many are wedded to their faction and fond opinions, and both practise and prescribe that which they condemn in the Church of Rome. Did they ingenuously examine things, and sincerely seek the truth, they might easily avoid the errors and schisms they are now justly charged with.

3. Let us then examine the grounds of our faith, especially in the points controverted among us at this time, then will your communion with the Church of England not be the result of chance, but of judgment and of choice. I know no mark of a true Church wanting here, and am sure that many things greatly commend to us her communion.

First, This Church does not void the necessity of an holy life. It cancels none of our obligations to God or man; but teacheth the absolute necessity of contrition and repentance, and mortification of our lusts; and does by no means indulge a liberty of living as we list.

Secondly, She fairly proposeth her doctrines, and does not refuse to have them examined, nor deprive her children of the means of doing it by the clearest light.

Thirdly, Nor are her doctrines fitted to advance a secular interest or glory. Religion is an holy institution; heavenly in its principle, and pure in its aim, and disdains to stoop to mean arts for wealth and worldly dignities.

* 1 John iv. 1.

Fourthly, This Church teacheth nothing that is manifestly false, nor puts us upon any practice which is a direct violation of any Divine institution.

Fifthly, Nor does this Church want the excellent badge of charity, which is indeed the bond of perfectness. Religion was designed as the greatest blessing to mankind, and the Author of the Christian was a great lover of the human race. Its precepts are full of kindness and benignity, and commend the highest pitch of civility and compassion, and the highest flights of friendship.

Sixthly, As obedience to kings and governors is a great part of the Christian religion, and an ornament to it, and was in an eminent degree practised by the first and best Christians, so it is the doctrine of our Church, and hath always been the practice of the members of it.

In a word, we pray for our enemies, and teach men to give both God and Cæsar their due. We think it safe to worship no image, and are sure we are right when we pray to God through the mediation of Jesus Christ. We know that God hears, but cannot say so of saints and angels. We receive the sacrament in both kinds as given by Christ, and received by the ancient Church : and do believe the sacramental bread, after consecration, to be what the Apostle calls it more than once. For the doctrine of concomitance, we leave it to them who understand it. We pray in a tongue we understand. We follow the holy Scriptures, believe the ancient Creeds, nor do we reject the first General Councils. We press men to piety, loyalty, humility and charity, and earnestly desire the salvation of mankind. We press men to all manner of good works, but place our hope in the mercy of God and merits of his Son. If we live up to our rule, we are safe ; if not, it is not the fault of our religion, it is our own. If we live up to our religion, we shall never be miserable in this world, and in the next shall be unspeakably happy. Which God of his mercy grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost be all honour and glory now and for ever. Amen.

BOOK III.

THE PROTESTANT RULE OF FAITH, EXPLAINED AND VINDICATED, AS RESTING UPON THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE.

THE
PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO READ THE HOLY SCRIPTURE
ASSERTED.

In Answer to the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th chapters of the Second Part of the Popish Representer.

THOUGH it is evident, as that the Scripture is in print, that the free use of it is by the Roman clergy denied to the vulgar, yet when they are charged with it by Protestants, they either take the confidence plainly to deny it, or if they own the charge (as the Representer doth), they endeavour to put such glosses upon it, as to make their denial of the Scripture to be in effect but a better way of granting it: for since it is not the words of the Bible, but the sense and meaning of the words that is properly the Word of God, while they withheld from them the letter they provide means to acquaint them with the spirit, or the true sense of Scripture, and so deliver it to them with much more advantage than people of any other persuasion have it.

What others have formerly written for their vindication in this matter, it is needless now to examine; since it is not to be supposed, but that the Representer hath said as much to the purpose as any of those who have gone before him. I shall therefore confine the ensuing Discourse to what he hath said in his 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th chapters. And that it may be the more clear and satisfactory, I shall shew these four things.

I. *What is the practice of the Church of Rome in this matter.*

II. *That this practice is plainly contrary to the will of*

God, to the reason of the thing, and to the practice of the Christian Church for more than a thousand years after Christ.

III. *The insufficiency of those reasons, by which the Representer endeavours to justify it.*

IV. *Vindicate those inferences the Protestants draw from it.*

All that is said by the Representer may, I think, be reduced to one or other of these heads.

CHAP. I.

Though some may think it needless to insist upon the first of these, since what the Protestants charge the Church of Rome with in this matter is freely enough owned by the Representer himself;* yet because some of that communion here in England (who, for prudential reasons, are not so straitly tied up) do confidently deny it, it may not be amiss, for their information, to give some short account of it, from better authority than that of the Representer.

For which, we need go no further than the fourth rule of the Trent Expurgatory Index, which is this: "Since it is manifest by experience, that if the holy Bible be promiscuously permitted in the vulgar tongue, by reason of the rashness of men more loss than profit will thence arise: in this matter, let the judgment of the bishop or inquisitor be stood to, that with the advice of the parish priest, or confessor, they may grant the reading of the Bible in the vulgar tongue, translated by Catholic authors, to such as they shall understand can receive no hurt by such reading, but increase of faith, and piety. Which faculty let them have in writing. But he, that without such faculty, shall presume to read, or to have the Bible, he may not receive absolution of his sins, except he first deliver up his Bible to the ordinary."

If any man shall say, that this rule hath not the force of a law. Monsieur de Maire, Counsellor, Almoner and Preacher to the King of France, in a book published by authority, shall give him an answer: "This rule," saith he, "is founded in ecclesiastical right, and no man can transgress it, without contradicting that obedience which he owes to the Church, and

* Chap. 6. p. 45, 46. Chap. 7. p. 52. Chap. 9. p. 57.

the holy See, from which it hath received its confirmation ; forasmuch as this rule was not made but in prosecution of the decree of the Council of Trent, &c. no man can deny but that it hath been approved by the holy See, and authorized by the Bulls of Pius IV. and Clement VIII., who, after they had viewed and diligently examined it, published it to the world, with order that it should be obeyed.”*

“ If,” says he, “ there be any thing that can hinder this rule from having the force of a law, it must be either because it hath not been published, or being published hath not been received ; but neither the one nor the other can be said, since it is evident, that this is the old quarrel we have with our heretics ; that this is that which our Church hath always been upbraided with by the enemies of the faith ; this is that which is the subject of their most outrageous calumnies ; this is that which hath been acknowledged by all wise men ; that which hath been earnestly maintained by all the defenders of catholic truths ; † that which no person is ignorant of ; that which the whole world publishes ; there being no point of belief more common, nor more general among the faithful, than this of the prohibition to read the Bible without permission. And this belief so common, is (says he) a certain proof, not only of the publication, but of the reception of this rule.”

It cannot be denied, but that it hath been received by all those nations by which the decrees of Trent were universally received : and so they were, as Pallavicino tells us ‡ in Italy, Spain, Sicily, Portugal, Poland, the greater part of Germany, and many other countries.

But suppose this rule were not received as imposed by the Council of Trent, yet in all Popish countries they have made it a law to themselves. It is not indeed observed in France, upon the authority of the Council ; but they have set it up, and established it as a law by their own authority, as is manifest by the mandates of their archbishops and bishops, the decrees of their provincial Councils, and the edicts and arrests

* Enfin je maintiens que cette Regle est fondée en droit Ecclesiastique, et qu'on ne la peut violer sans choquer l'obeïssance que l'on doit à l'Eglise, etc. Le Sanctuaire fermé aux Profanes, part 3. c. 1. p. 335, 336.

† — Ce que personne n'ignore ; ce que tout le monde publie, n'y ayant point de creance plus commune ny plus generale parmy les fideles, etc. Ibid.

‡ Pallav. l. 24. c. 9, 11, 12, 13. [839. 856. 861. 869. Rom. 1664.]

of their Kings and Parliaments.* It is true, there is a little more latitude in France for granting a licence; for not only the bishop and his vicar-general, but the penitentiary, or a man's own parish priest may grant it † But then to make an amends for this, in other countries the rule is made stricter than it was at first by the Trent Fathers; for that does not forbid the vulgar Bible, but only the reading it without a licence; whereas the fifth rule of the Spanish Index, prohibits the Bibles themselves in the vulgar tongue, and all parts of them too; and that not only printed, but in manuscript. ‡ And Alfonsus de Castro tells us, "That Ferdinand, King of Spain, forbade any man, under the heaviest penalties, to translate the Bible into the vulgar tongue, or to keep any Bible in his hands already translated." § And in the Index of Pope Alexander VII. not only those Bibles that are translated and printed by heretics, but all Bibles in any vulgar tongue are prohibited. || Yea, so careful are the clergy in most Popish countries to keep the laity from the knowledge of the Scriptures, that, as Sir Edwin Sandys relates, in their very sermons, though they preach for the most part on the Gospel of the day, yet they do not read or otherwise recite the text, but discourse only on such points of it as they think fittest, that no sound of Scripture may possess the people. I say, in most Popish countries, because the use of France, as he says, is otherwise. ¶

It would be, therefore, ridiculous, in Spain, to talk of a licence, because the Bible itself is not there permitted in the vulgar tongue. And all that is permitted in other countries, where the Church of Rome bears sway without control, is, that a man may read the holy Scripture, in case he can get a licence for it.

* La Bible Deffendue au Vulgaire. Part 3. c. 1. et 4. Collectio Auctor. Versiones Vulg. damnant.

† Mandement de Monseigneur L'Archevesque de Paris portant defense de lire la Bible en Langue Vulgaire sans permission. Fait le 2 de Septembre, 1650.

‡ Prohibentur Biblia lingua vulgari extantia, cum omnibus eorum partibus impressis aut manuscriptis; pariter summaria et compendia quamvis historica, eorundem Bibliorum, aut librorum sacræ Scripturæ, idiomate aut lingua vulgari. [p. xxv. col. 2. Madrit. 1667.]

§ Alfons. de Castro advers. Hæres. l. 1. c. 13. [Fol. 22. p. 2. Par. 1543.]

|| Biblia vulgari quocunque idiomate conscripta.

¶ Sandys's Europæ Speculum. p. 126, 127. [p. 130. Lond. 1687.]

But now, to whom may this licence be granted? What, to all men indifferently, who ask it? No; "but to those only who they know can receive no hurt, but increase of faith and piety thereby:"* that is, as the Representer expresses it, "Those who are not in danger of preferring their own sense before that which they receive from their pastors and the Church."† And may it not be presumed that these men will never so much as ask it? For to what purpose should they desire to read the Scriptures, who are already resolved (right or wrong) to believe as the priest bids them? Yea, so far are they from desiring it, that they reckon it a mortal sin; and should others presume to ask it, it would be denied them, because they cannot so much as ask it; but they will be suspected to be of the number of those persons who are in the greatest danger of receiving hurt by it. So that, upon the whole matter, the great noise they make of licences is but a mere sham, since those of the vulgar, who might, perhaps, obtain them, are never likely to ask them, and those who will be most forward to ask them will never be able to obtain them.

And that it was indeed a device of the clergy, to get the Bible again out of the hands of the people, among whom it was then dispersed, is plain enough; because whosoever had got a Bible, and had not a licence, he might not receive absolution of his sins, unless he first delivered up his Bible to the ordinary. And having thus got the Bible again into their own keeping, that they designed, as much as possible, to keep it for the future out of the hands of the people, is further manifest, from the addition made to this rule by Pope Clement VIII. upon the new impression of it, *viz.* "That by this impression or edition, no new faculty is given to bishops or inquisitors, or any superiors of regulars, to grant a licence of buying, reading, or retaining the Bible in the vulgar tongue; since hitherto, by the command and usage of the holy Roman and universal Inquisition, that faculty of granting such licences of reading or retaining the vulgar Bibles, or any parts of the holy Scriptures, as well of the New as the Old Testament, in any vulgar tongue, hath been taken from them, which," says he, "is to be inviolably observed."‡ If, then,

* Quos intellexerint ex hujusmodi lectione, non damnum, sed fidei atque pietatis augmentum capere posse. [Lafbe, vol. 14. p. 953.]

† Chap. 7. p. 52.

‡ Observat. Clement VIII. circa Reg. quartam Trid.

this power formerly given of granting licences be taken away, and no new power of granting them given, it necessarily follows, that there is now no such thing in being as a power of granting licences; or had there been any such power before this new impression of the rule was made, yet it was then taken away by the Pope, in decreeing that "the command and practice of the Roman Inquisition was to be inviolably observed." And lest some perhaps might presume to read the Bible, notwithstanding the penalty threatened to them that do so, to give check as much as might be to such presumption, the booksellers who shall sell them to such persons, besides the loss of the price of the books, are liable to be punished at the bishop's pleasure.

It would be now superfluous to produce Cardinal Bellarmine, Sixtus Senensis, Stapleton, Gretser, Ledesna, Azorius, or any other great names in the Church of Rome, as witnesses of this practice; I shall, therefore, conclude with a brief recollection of what hath been delivered.

First, In the Pope's, or the King of Spain's dominions, no vulgar translation of the Bible is allowed, nor any parcels or summaries of the Bible, or of the stories thereof.

Secondly, In those countries where the vulgar Bible is not absolutely prohibited, no man is allowed to read it without a licence.

Thirdly, This licence must be granted by the bishop or inquisitor only (though by the custom of France it may be granted by the penitentiary or curate.)

Fourthly, It may not be granted by them to all persons who desire it, but to those only of whom they shall understand that they can receive no hurt by reading it: that is, those of whom they are so secure, that they think there is no fear of losing them, and few or none of these will ever desire it; so that all this talk of granting leave to read the Bible amounts to no more than this—that those who desire it, shall for the most part be denied it. Even the Mareschal of Chastres's lady, notwithstanding her great quality and piety, could not, without much difficulty, get a licence from the Archbishop of Sens; nor could she by any means procure it for the whole Bible, but for some certain books only.*

* *Le Sanctuaire fermé aux Profanes*, p. 339.

CHAP. II.

THAT it is contrary to the will of God, contrary to reason ; yea, contrary to the practice of the Christian Church for more than a thousand years after Christ, not to permit the free use of the holy Scriptures to the vulgar.

SECT. I.

THAT it is the will of God that the vulgar should have the free use of the Scripture, omitting many other arguments, these three alone may suffice to prove :

1. That God caused it at first to be written in a language understood by the vulgar.

2. He caused it to be directed and addressed to them.

3. He commanded them to acquaint themselves with it.

1. God caused the holy Scriptures to be at first written in a language understood by the vulgar. That the Books of Moses and the Prophets were written in the common language of the Jews, is generally granted by the Romanists themselves. Monsieur Mallet, indeed, has been so hardy as to say, that "it is most probable that the books of the Law were not composed by Moses in the vulgar language of the Jews ;" but the arguments by which he attempts to prove it are not only ridiculous, and in themselves false, but in case they were true, would be so far from establishing what he asserts, that they would quite destroy it. He that hath a mind to see them exposed, let him consult Monsieur Arnaud's (another learned Romanist) Confutation of his book,* out of which I shall at present transcribe but one passage. "I shall say a word only," says he, "of Moses's last song, because it is a demonstrable proof that there is nothing in the world more manifestly false than that which Monsieur Mallet says is probable ; for there is nothing in all the books of Moses that is more nobly written, and in a more lofty style, than this song, which he commanded the Jews to write, and to learn by heart, and to sing often, that it might serve as a testimony against

* De la Lecture de l'Ecriture Sainte contre les Paradoxes extravagans et impies de Mons. Mallet.

themselves if they should forsake the worship of God. He, therefore, certainly supposed that they would understand it, since his intention was that, in singing it, they should be touched and affected with it.”*

As for the Books of the New Testament, there is no question (save of two only, the Gospel of St. Matthew, and the Epistle to the Hebrews) but that they were all written in Greek, which was then the most vulgar language in the world, there being no other tongue, at that time, understood by so many people. And whereas it is objected, that the Latin was the vulgar tongue of the Romans, to whom, notwithstanding, St. Paul wrote in Greek, the answer is easy, that the Greek tongue was at that time more generally understood and used at Rome itself: it was more known to the strangers there, and particularly to the Jews, whom the Apostle had in his Epistle a special regard to, who were all acquainted with the Greek, but for the most part ignorant of the Latin tongue.† And for the Romans themselves, scarce any could be found, no, not among their women, who did not understand it; in such common use was it, that (as Mr. Arnaud observes) they taught it even their parrots.‡

If St. Matthew's Gospel was written at first in Hebrew (as many of the ancients affirm), by Hebrew they meant that which was then the vulgar language of the Jews who dwelt at Jerusalem, for whose sake his Gospel was primarily written. This is asserted by such great authorities in the Church of Rome, as one would think no Romanist should reject, particularly by Estius and Bellarmine. I shall recite Bellarmine's words, and, for brevity sake, refer the reader to Estius.§ “It is very probable,” says the Cardinal, “that the Gospel of St. Matthew and the Epistle to the Hebrews were written in the Syriac tongue; for Albertus Widmestadius and Guido Fabritius have proved it by the most convincing arguments. Neither do the ancient writers, Irenæus, Origen, Eusebius,

* Je diray Seulement un mot de son dernier Cantique; parce que c'est une preuve demonstrative pour faire voir que Mr. Mall. appelle probable la chose du monde la plus visiblement fausse, &c. l. 1. c. 4. p. 55. [c. 6. p. 50. Anver. 1680.]

† Grot. Annot. in Evang. S. Marci [vol. 2. p. 291. col. 2. Lond. 1679.] et Epist. ad Heb. [Ibid. p. 1010. col. 2.]

‡ De la Lect. &c. l. 2. c. 13.

§ Est. Proleg. in Comment. in Epist. ad Hebræos, super hac questione, Qua lingua scripta sit Epist. ad Hebræos. [p. 894. col. 1. Col. Agr. 1631.]

Athanasius, Epiphanius, Jerome, who say these books (especially the Gospel of St. Matthew) were written in Hebrew, contradict these; for they speak of that Hebrew which was the vulgar tongue in the time of the Apostles, even as in the Gospel itself we frequently read that a thing was so called in the Hebrew, when it is manifest that it was so called in the Syriac: for instance, 'He went forth into a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha;' whereas, Golgotha is not a proper Hebrew, but a Syriac word."*

Add to this, that Eusebius says expressly, that St. Matthew writ his Gospel in his country language; and the reason he gives for it necessarily required that he should do so.†

For the Epistle to the Hebrews, it matters not whether it was originally written in Greek or Syriac, because both these languages were then generally understood by the Hebrews, though Estius has produced such arguments as will not easily be answered, to prove that it was at first written in Greek. To conclude this argument: since God caused the Scriptures to be at first written in a language the vulgar were acquainted with, who can be so senseless as to imagine that it was not his pleasure that the vulgar should read them?

2. God at first addressed the holy Scriptures to the vulgar, as well as to others: "I have written to him (saith God), the great things of my law."‡ Who was he to whom he had written them? The verse foregoing told us it was Ephraim, who is there put for the whole body of the Israelites. The first Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, is directed to all that in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. The second, to the Church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia. For the rest of the Epistles, I refer the reader to the discourse quoted in the margin.§ Now can any man who has not quite lost his understanding suppose, that God would not have these Epistles read by those persons to whom they were written?

There are those persons, I know, who pretend to think so; who tell us, that though St. Paul directed his Epistles to all Christians in general, yet his intention was, that the pastors of

* Bell. de Verbo Dei, l. 2. c. 4.

† Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. 3. [c. 24. p. 95. Par. 1659.]

‡ Hos. viii. 12.

§ The Lay Christian's Obligation to read the Holy Scriptures.

the Church only should read them. But can any thing be said more absurdly? Are not those Epistles he designed for the pastors, directed to them alone? As his Epistles to Timothy and Titus: why then should he direct his other Epistles to all the saints, but that it was his intention, that they all should be made acquainted with them? When his Epistle to the Philippians is directed to ALL the saints at Philippi, together with the bishops and deacons: can any man have the face to say, that he intended it only for the bishops and deacons? Is it not as manifest, as that there are such epistles, that his speech in them is usually addressed to the people? And let a man but seriously consider, that in his Epistle to the Colossians, he commands, "That after that Epistle had been read among them, they should cause it to be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans:"* that he gives a most solemn charge, that his Epistle to the Thessalonians "should be read to all the holy brethren;"† and then believe, if he can, that it was his meaning, that the Scripture should be withheld from any the poorest and most ignorant Christian.

3. Nor has God only addressed the holy Scriptures to the vulgar, but he hath also commanded them to acquaint themselves familiarly with them. "These words which I command thee this day," saith God to all Israel (priests and people), "shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house," &c.‡ Can it be supposed, that they should talk of these words, when they sat in their houses, and when they walked by the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up; that they should bind them for a sign upon their hands, and that they should be as frontlets between their eyes; that they should write them upon the posts of their houses, and upon their gates; that they should teach them diligently to their children, and yet should not be permitted to read them? When Moses had made an end of speaking these words, having said all that he had in charge from God to deliver to this people, he concludes thus: "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law; for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life," &c.§ Is

Coloss. iv. 16.

† 1 Thess. v. 27.
§ Deut. xxxii. 46, 47.

‡ Deut. vi. 6, 7, 8.

this said like a man that would not have them so much as read the words he had spoken to them?

And for the New Testament, the command is general, to Christians of all states and qualities, "That the word of Christ dwell in them;" and not only so, but that it dwell in them "richly:" so richly, that they may thereby be endowed "with all wisdom."* Which St. Chrysostom thought so plain a command to the common people to read the Scriptures, that in his sermon upon these words, he thus earnestly exhorts them; "Hearken all ye that are men of the world, and have a wife and children under your government, how even you he commands especially to read the Scriptures; and that not simply, or now and then by chance, but with much diligence."† If St. Chrysostom's word be not thought sufficient, I shall add to it a late famous divine of the Church of Rome. "What more clear," saith he, "than that St. Paul thus exhorts, Coloss. iii. 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you.' But in what you? In those saints and faithful brethren in Christ that were at Colosse, to whom he inscribed this Epistle (not as some other Epistles to bishops, priests, and deacons); let the word of Christ therefore dwell in you in all wisdom," &c.‡ Which the author speaks to shew, that the reading of the Scriptures ought not to be prohibited to laymen. That this prohibition is indeed contrary to the will of God, will yet further appear, by shewing that it is very absurd and unreasonable.

SECT. II.

"Let us hear what common reason saith," (to use the words of a reverend person of our own Church, in an excellent treatise upon this subject), "and that teaches us, that since the holy Scriptures were written for the use and benefit of all, all should have the liberty to read them. They were written for all, it is plain, for that which they teach is the duty of all, that which they promise is the portion of all."§

Dare any one say, that the Scripture was not given as a rule to the people? That it was not designed to teach them, not only what they are concerned to know and to do in the general,

* Coloss. iii. 16.

† Hom. 9. in Epist. ad Coloss. [vol. 11. p. 390. Par. 1734.]

‡ Espenc. in Epist. ad Tit. cap. 2. p. 518, 519. [Par. 1619.]

§ Search the Scriptures, p. 58.

as they are men, or as they are Christians, but to instruct them also more particularly, how they ought to demean themselves in their several callings and relations, in their different states and conditions of life, that they may walk worthy of God in this world, and be made meet for the happiness of the next? And what can be more absurd, than that a man should not be suffered to read those lessons, which, as he hopes for salvation, he is bound to learn? That he should not be permitted the perusal of those laws, which under peril of damnation he is bound to obey? That he should be forbid to see with his own eyes, what God hath promised to quicken him to his duty; and what he hath threatened, to deter him from the contrary?

"Are not the Scriptures (as St. Chrysostom calls them) the weapons of our spiritual warfare, the storehouse of spiritual medicines?"* Are they not given for a light to our feet and a lamp to our paths?† And therefore, to deprive the people of them, what is it else, but to take away the light from a man in darkness? to deny medicines to one that is sick? or to deprive a soldier of those weapons, by which he should defend himself, and repel his enemies? What the Representer says in opposition to this, shall be anon considered.

I shall add no more upon this head, than what I shall borrow from some great and learned men of the Church of Rome. The Bishop of Venice in his dedicatory epistle prefixed to his translation of the New Testament, addresses thus to all Christians indifferently: "Behold it is the Testament of the Son of God, your Father and your Judge, which I offer to you: I cannot doubt but the reading of it will be acceptable to you. You will see that he hath there left you a patrimony most divine, which is his truth; and that he hath divided it in a wonderful manner: for though it be but one, yet he hath suited it to the condition, and to the duties of every man, to the end, that all men by practising its precepts, may live in peace, and may come to the possession of his inheritance, which is eternal life."‡

The translators of the Mons Testament, in their preface

* Hom. 9. in Epist. ad Coloss. [ut supra.]

† Psal. cxix. 105. Prov. vi. 23.

‡ Voicy le Testament du Fils de Dieu vostre Pere et vostre Juge, que je vous offre. Je ne puis douter que la lecture ne vous en soit agreable. Vous verrez qu'il vous y laisse un patrimoine tout divin, qui est sa Verité, &c.

have these words: "If God heretofore commanded his people to read that law without ceasing, which he had given them, and to meditate in it day and night. And if the religious believe themselves obliged to read perpetually, the rule they have received from their founder, how can we neglect to read the law of Jesus Christ, the words of which are spirit and life? Since being entered by baptism into the catholic and universal religion, of which Jesus Christ is the founder, we ought to look upon the Gospel as our rule, which teaches us his will, which assures us of his promises, which is our light in this world, and which must one day be our judge?"* In the judgment of these learned men of the Church of Rome, to deny the reading of the Scriptures to the people, is as unreasonable and unjust, as not to suffer an heir to see his father's will, or to forbid the Regulars the sight of their rule.

If any man shall think that these testimonies are not weighty enough, I shall add another, which cannot be refused by those men I now dispute against, *viz.* that of Pope Gregory the Great: "The Holy Scripture," saith he, "as a kind of looking-glass, is set before the eyes of our mind, that our inward face may be seen by it. By it we know what in us is foul, and what is fair; by it we perceive how much we profit; by it how far we are from profiting. It declares the brave exploits of the saints, and provokes the weak to the imitation of them; and while it commemorates their victorious acts, it confirms and strengthens our weakness against the assaults of vice, and we are the less fearful in the encounter, by seeing the foregoing triumphs of so many valiant men. But sometimes it sets before us, not only their virtues but their falls, that in the victory of the strong, we may find that which we ought to imitate, and again in their falls, that which we ought to fear."† I appeal now to the Romanists themselves, whether this great Pope thought it not fit, that the reading of the Holy Scriptures should be left free to every man? If they say no, I

* Que si Dieu avoit commandé autrefois à son peuple de lire sans cesse la loy que il luy avoit donnée, et de la mediter jour et nuit; et si les Religieux se croient obligez de lire tous les jours la Regle qu'ils ont reçue de leur Instituteur; comment pouvons nous negliger de lire la loy de Jesus Christ, &c. p. 4, 5.

† Scriptura sacra mentis oculis quasi quoddam speculum opponitur, ut interna nostra facies in ipsa videatur, &c. Expos. Moral. in 1 cap. Job. 1. 2. c. 1. fol. 4. K. [vol. 1. p. 37. Par. 1705.]

question not but to make them confess it, whether they will or no, in the following parts of this discourse.

SECT. III.

Nor is the practice of the Roman Church now, less contrary to the practice of the whole Christian Church, for more than a thousand years after Christ.

That the Scriptures lay open to all sorts of persons in the Jewish Church, I need not prove; it is sufficiently known by that passage of Josephus,* frequently quoted by Protestant writers, *viz.* "That if any man ask a Jew concerning the laws, he will tell him every thing more readily than his name; for learning them as soon as they come to have sense of any thing, they retain them deeply imprinted in their minds." And Maimonides informs us, that it did not suffice a Jew, barely to read the law; but he ~~was~~ to write it too. For though a father had left his son a copy of the law, he was, notwithstanding, obliged to write for himself, another copy with his own hand; or procure it to be written, if he could not write himself. And therefore the Pentateuch at least (as Morinus a learned Romanist infers),† that is the Books of Moses, were in the hands of all the Jews; and frequently many copies were in one family, because they were wont to keep those that were left by their fathers.

But my design at present is to shew that the practice of the Christian Church (yea, of the Roman Church itself heretofore) was quite contrary to the rules and practice of the Church of Rome now: and that this may be made so evident that those who wish it was false may be constrained to confess it: I shall proceed in the same method that a reverend author hath done in a late learned discourse upon another controverted point;‡ *viz.* I shall prove by unquestionable testimonies, for twelve hundred years downward from our Saviour's birth, that the reading of the Scripture had no restraint put upon it, but was left in common to all Christians.

That it was so in the first age we have undeniable evidence in the Scripture itself. Would our Saviour and his Apostles, in their popular discourses, so frequently have sent their hearers to the Scriptures, had they not then been allowed to

* Joseph. l. 2. contr. Appion. [vol. 2. p. 484. Amst. 1726.]

† Exercit. Bibl. l. 2. Exercit. 16. c. 1. n. 6, 7.

‡ A Vindication of the Answer to some Papers, &c.

read them? * Could the Bereans have searched the Scriptures to see whether those things that were spoken by Paul were so, † had not the Scripture been in their hands? Had not all the saints in all Achaia been permitted to read the Scriptures, could St. Paul have said truly to them, "We write none other things to you than what you read?" ‡ That very text so frequently produced by Romish writers to prove that the vulgar ought not to read the Scriptures, is an argument that in the Apostles' time they did so: for it is not easy to conceive how "the unlearned and unstable should wrest the Scriptures," § had they never read them.

In the same age, in St. Clement's Epistle directed to all the Christians at Corinth, we find these words: "You have known, beloved, you have well known the holy Scriptures, you have thoroughly looked into the oracles of God," &c. || And if the Christians at Corinth were so conversant in the Scriptures, surely the Christians of Rome, in the time of this bishop, were not forbidden to read them.

Toward the end of the second age, Clement of Alexandria gives this character of a Christian: "His whole life is a holy solemnity, his sacrifices are prayers and praises; and conferences of the Scriptures before his meal, and psalms and hymns while he is at it." ¶ Certainly no restraint was then laid upon the reading of the Scripture, when it was the common practice of Christians to read it, and make it the matter of their discourse at their meals.

For the third century (though many other witnesses stand ready, yet) Origen alone may suffice. Whether we consider, 1. How early he himself was educated in the Scriptures: or, 2. What he hath left on record to this purpose.

First, His father Leonides, before he put him to other learning, put him upon the study of the Scriptures, of which he set him a daily task to learn by heart. ** Now his father being a layman, and he himself then a child (for the father was crowned with martyrdom before the son was seventeen years old), what

* Matth. xxi. 13. Luke vi. 3, 4. John x. 34, 35. Acts ii. 16.

† Acts xvii. 11. ‡ 2 Cor. i. 13. § 2 Pet. iii. 16.

|| 'Επίστασθε γάρ, καὶ καλῶς ἐπιστασθε τὰς ἱερὰς γραφὰς, καὶ ἐγκεκρυ-
θετε εἰς τὰ λόγια τοῦ Θεοῦ. [Bibl. Patr. Apostol. p. 89. Lips. 1699.]

¶ "Ἄπας δὲ ὁ βίος αὐτοῦ πανήγυρις ἁγία. αὐτίκα θυσίαι μὲν αὐτῷ,
εὐχαὶ τε καὶ αἶνοι, καὶ αἱ πρὸ τῆς ἐστίασεως ἐντεύξεις τῶν γραφῶν,
ψαλμοὶ δὲ καὶ ὕμνοι παρὰ τὴν ἐστίασιν. Stromat. 17. p. 728. Edit.
1629.

** Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. 6. c. 2. [ut supra, p. 201.]

Arnaud hence infers, undeniably follows, *viz.* That the Church then thought it good, not only for laymen to read the Scriptures, but to make their children also read them in their tender age.

2. Of those many passages which Arnaud and others have observed in his writings, it will be sufficient to produce one; directing his speech to all Christians without distinction, he thus exhorts them: "We beseech you not to content yourselves to hear the Word of God when read in the Church, but to apply yourselves to it at home, and to meditate upon it day and night; for Jesus Christ is there present as well as in the Church, and they that seek him shall find him every where. Therefore he hath commanded us to meditate in the law of the Lord, when we walk by the way, and when we sit in our houses, when we lie down, and when we rise up."*

In the beginning of the fourth age, it is certain that the Bible was in laymen's hands, because in Diocletian's persecution, many laymen, to save themselves, delivered up their Bibles to be burnt.†

That in the succeeding parts of that age, under the Christian emperors, they had the free use of them, is as manifest; because we find that all sorts of people were frequently and earnestly pressed by their teachers to read them.

I shall not insist upon what is by others produced out of St. Jerome, *viz.* The dedication of his Commentaries upon the Scriptures to women, his epistles to many of that sex, in which he highly commends them for their study of the Scriptures, and exhorts them diligently to instruct their children therein: how he advised Gaudentius to cause his daughter, at seven years old, to get the Psalms by heart, and when she should come to the age of twelve, to treasure up in her heart the Books of Solomon, the Gospels, the Epistles of the Apostles, and the Prophets. But (omitting these) I think it enough to tell you, that even Father Thomassin affirms, that this Father most straitly charged, not only the clergy and the religious (that is, monks and nuns) to read the Scriptures; but recommended the reading of them to all sorts of persons, without distinction of age or sex, even to women and girls.‡

* Hom. 9. in Levit. [vol. 2. p. 240. Par. 1733.]

† Quid commemorem Laicos, qui tunc in Ecclesia nulla fuerant dignitate suffulti? &c. Optat. advers. Parmen. [Bibl. Vet. Patr. vol. 5. p. 465. col. 1. Venet. 1769.]

‡ Part 1. l. 11. c. 10. n. 6.

What pretence then have the Papists for quoting St. Jerome as one of their side? You shall hear. In his Epistle to Paulinus he complains, That whereas men of all other arts contained themselves within the bounds of their own profession, every one took upon him to be a teacher of the Scriptures, even the "doting old man, and the tatling old wife, &c."* an unanswerable argument, that the most simple of both sexes did then freely read the Scriptures; for could they presume to teach them, had they never read them? Nor doth he blame their reading them; but that they took upon them to be teachers, before they themselves had learned them; *docent antequam discant*.

How vehement and copious St. Austin is in his exhortations to his hearers of all ranks and qualities, to read the Scriptures, you may be informed by another learned Papist.† I shall give but a taste: "It may not suffice," says he, "that you hear the divine Scriptures read in the churches; but in your houses either read them yourselves or get others to read, and do you readily hearken to them. Hear the divine Scriptures read in the church, as you are wont, and read them over again at home. If any be so employed, that before his repast he cannot have leisure, let it not grieve him to read something of them at his meal; that as the body is fed with meat, so the soul may be refreshed with the words of God; that the whole man, both outward and inward, may arise satisfied from a holy and wholesome banquet," &c.‡

What the same learned Romanist hath to the same purpose produced out of St. Chrysostom, if the Representer please to read, methinks it should put him to the blush. I shall only observe, that this incomparable Saint makes the reading of the Scriptures not only necessary for all men of whatsoever rank they be, but more necessary for those whose business lies in the midst of the world, than for those who live more retired from it. As you may see by many pregnant proofs in that excellent treatise before mentioned.§

Though I omit many, as St. Basil, St. Hilary, St. Ambrose, &c. yet I shall mention two more witnesses in this age; the

* Quod Medicorum est promittunt Medici, tractant fabrilis Fabri; Sola Scripturarum ars est quam sibi passim omnes vendicant.—hanc garrulus anus, hanc delirus senex, &c. [vol. 1. p. 273. Veron. 1734.]

† Espenc. Comment. in Epist. ad Tit. c. 2. p. 517. Ed. Paris. 1619.

‡ De Tempore Sermon. 55, 56, 57. [Sermon. 141, 142, 255. Ibid. vol. 5. p. 248, 250, 418.] De Sanctis Sermon. 38. [Sermon. 77. Ibid. p. 140.]

§ Search the Scriptures, p. 40.

first is, Julian the Apostate, who derides the Christians for breeding up their children in the knowledge of the Scriptures. The second is St. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, who, in his Catechism for the Illuminate (that is, persons newly baptized), charges them to read all the Books both of the Old and New Testament, and diligently to meditate upon them.*

In the fifth age, Cyril of Alexandria, in his Books against Julian, informs us: that it was then also the practice of Christians, not barely to read the Scriptures themselves, but to train up their children in them. And in answer to the Apostate's scurrilous objections, he shews what advantages accrued to them by being early instructed in the divine Scripture, above all that could be expected from the learning of the Greeks.†

In the sixth age, Pope Gregory the Great, in a popular sermon, thus exhorts his hearers: "Study, most dear brethren, the words of God. Do not despise the letters our Maker hath sent us. It is a great advantage that by them the soul is quickened, lest it should be benumbed with the cold of its iniquity. When we there see that just men have done valiantly, we ourselves are disposed to courage in well-doing. The soul of the reader is enkindled by the flame of holy examples. It sees their noble acts and is displeased with itself that it doth not imitate them. Hence in the voice of the bridegroom it is said to the bride, thy neck is like the tower of David, builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers. In the neck is the throat, in the throat is the voice: what therefore is meant by the neck of holy Church but its Sacred Oracles, whereon a thousand shields are said to hang, because all our defence is contained in the Sacred Oracles. For there are the commandments of God, there are the examples of just men. If the soul grow cold in the love of God, let it hear what is said: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," &c.‡ He that desires to see more to this purpose, let him consult his moral Exposition of the Book of Job (especially l. 20), his Epistle to Leander archbishop of Sevil, and read his famous story of poor Servolus.§ And when he has done so, I shall leave him to judge whether this great Pope was of the same judgment with Pope Pius IV. and the Trent Fathers? Whether the holy Scrip-

* Cateches. 4. de Sacra Script. p. 36, 37, 38. Edit. Par. 1640.

† Lib. 7. contra Julianum. [vol. 6. p. 232. Lutet. 1638.]

‡ Hom. 16. Super Ezech. [Lib. 2. Hom. 3. ut supra, p. 1337.]

§ Hom. 15. de divers. Lect. Evangelii. [Lib. 1. Hom. 15. Ibid. 1491.]

tures were not in his time read at Rome by the most unlearned vulgar?

For the seventh age, Isidore, archbishop of Sevil, is a witness beyond exception: "The holy Scriptures," saith he, "to the weak, and those that are children in understanding, as to its history, seems low in words; when to more excellent men it rises higher, while it opens to them its mysteries, and by this means it remains common both to the little ones and to the perfect. The holy Scripture is varied in proportion to the understanding of every reader; as manna, which to the ancient people gave a different taste according to their different palates," &c.*

That the same practice continued in the eighth age, we are assured by venerable Bede and the Saxon Homilies. In his character of Aidan, bishop of the Northumbrians, he makes it none of the least of his virtues, "That he was so far from the sloth of the age, that all that went with him, whether clergy or laymen, were obliged to meditate, that is, to take pains to read the Scriptures, or to learn the Psalms. This," saith he, "was his daily work, and the work of all those that were with him."†

And because the reading of the Scriptures was then too generally neglected, the Saxon Church endeavoured a remedy for this evil in her Homilies; out of which I shall cite but one passage, *viz.* "The reading of the holy Scriptures purges the soul of the reader. It brings to mind the fear of eternal punishment; it also lifts up his heart to the joy above. Who-soever would be together with God, he ought to pray often, and often to read the holy Scriptures; for when we pray, we speak to God, and when we read the holy Bible, God speaks to us. The reading of the holy Bible brings a double benefit to the readers: the first, that it informs the mind, the other, that it takes it off from the trifles of this world, to the love of God." How far was the Church yet from believing that laymen's reading of the Scriptures did more hurt than good? He that hath a mind to see more out of the Saxon Homilies, let him consult the notes on Bede's Ecclesiastical History.‡

* *Scriptura Sacra infirmis et sensu parvulis secundum historiam humilis videtur in Verbis; cum excellentioribus autem viris altius incedit, dum eis sua mysteria pandit, atque per hoc utrisque manet communis, et parvulis et perfectis.* Sententiar. l. 1. c. 18. [p. 421. col. 1. Colon. Agr. 1617.]

† *Hist. Ecclesiast.* l. 3. c. 5.

‡ *Lib.* 3. p. 172, 173, 174. l. 4. p. 310.

In the ninth age, Rabanus Maurus, archbishop of Mentz, speaks thus: "That divine wisdom which shines forth in the holy Scripture, is both to the strong and weak, both to the wise and foolish, if they will mind it, and truly obey it, a wholesome medicine. It is the enlightening of the mind, the correction of life, the path of righteousness. And therefore both the greater and the lesser do want its help, and stand in need of its conduct."*

In the tenth, Odo, abbot of Clugny, tells us: "That by the wild goats which God speaks of to Job, are meant all good and wise men. For as these goats abide in the rocks, and if they at any time fall from their heights, they keep themselves unhurt in their flesh: so these good men dwell in the rocks, because they endeavour to live according to the examples of the Fathers; and when they fall at any time, they are not dashed in pieces, because leaning upon the Scriptures of the two Testaments, they escape, and by the comfort of them, sustain themselves, that they do not faint in trouble."† It seems, the Scriptures were yet thought useful to every man to comfort him in troubles and afflictions.

In the eleventh age, hear what advice Theophylact gives to parents: "If thou wilt have thy children obey thee, instruct them in the word of God; say not, that it belongs only to monks to read the Scriptures; for it is the duty of every Christian; especially of those who are conversant in the world, who stand in need of greater assistances, as men tossed in a storm. It is thy concern and interest that they hear the Scriptures, for they will thence learn to honour their father and mother."‡ So far was this great bishop from thinking the reading of the Scriptures hurtful to the laity, that he thought it more necessary for them than others; so far from confining them only to the learned, that he would have children, the most ignorant of the laity, to read them.

In the twelfth age, Rupertus Tuitiensis says: "That the holy Scripture is rightly called a field, because it is in truth a public thing, that lies open, and is proposed to all men who

* *Sapientia Divina quæ in Sacra Scriptura elucet, omnibus tam potentibus quam infirmis, tam sapientibus quam insipientibus, si eam recte intenderint, et ei rite obedierint, Medicina Salubris est. Ipsa est Illuminatio animæ, &c.*

† *Collat. l. 3.*

‡ *Theoph. in Ephes. c. 6. v. 4. [vol. 2. p. 415. Venet. 1755.]*

are desirous to read or hear it.”* To whom we may add St. Bernard, who in a popular discourse earnestly exhorts his hearers to apply themselves to the Scriptures, from the consideration of those inestimable benefits they would receive thereby.†

Thus I have shewed the practice of the Christian Church to the twelfth age; not from the testimonies of obscure and suspected authors, but of men famous in their generations, and whose names are held in great veneration in the Church of Rome. Which I have the rather done, because some persons have had the confidence to bear the world in hand, that in the primitive Church a restraint was laid upon the reading of the Scripture. An assertion so manifestly untrue, that we need desire no clearer proofs of the contrary, than those two or three passages out of the ancients they produce for it.

If the reader desire to know, when, and upon what occasion this liberty was first taken from laymen, I will now tell him. The first Synodical prohibition, was that of the Synod of Toulouse, in the year 1228, in these words: “We forbid that laymen be permitted to have the books of the Old and the New Testament; unless perhaps some one out of devotion desire to have the Psalter or Breviary for divine offices, and the Hours of the Blessed Virgin; but even those now mentioned, they may not have translated in the vulgar tongue.”‡

The special occasion of this decree, was the preaching of the Waldenses; who taught, that in articles of faith, the holy Scripture was the rule, by which men were to judge; that whatsoever was not agreeable to the word of God, ought to be rejected; that the reading and knowledge of the Scripture, was free and necessary to all men, both laity and clergy.§ By this time the Church of Rome had gotten such a new faith, as would not abide the old test; and therefore, it was prudently done, to deprive the people of the Scripture, that

* Sancta Scriptura recte dicitur ager, quia profecto res publica est, res in aperto posita, et cunctis hominibus, imò populis omnibus legere vel audire cupientibus proposita est. L. 1. de Glorific. Trinit.

† Sermon. 24. de diversis. [vol. 1. par. 2. p. 2382. Par. 1839.]

‡ Prohibemus etiam ne Libros Veteris et Novi Testamenti Laici permittantur habere; nisi forte Psalterium aut Breviarium pro Divinis Officiis, ac horas Beatæ Virginis aliquis ex devotione habere velit: Sed ne præmissos libros habeant in vulgari Translatos. D'Acherii, tom. 2. p. 624. [vol. 1. p. 711. col. 2. Par. 1723.]

§ Cent. 12. Ecclesiast. Hist. c. 8.

they might not be able to discover those errors into which they led them.

CHAP. III.

LET us now see what the Representer offers, to justify this practice of the present Church of Rome, so manifestly repugnant to Scripture, to reason, and to the ancient practice of the Church of Rome itself; yea of the whole Christian Church throughout the world.

Surely, they must be very weighty reasons, or else they will never bear down so great a weight, as lies in the other scale against them. Does he shew, that God hath retracted his first grant? That he hath repealed his old law, and established one quite contrary in the room of it? Does he shew, that the reason of the thing is changed? So that if the primitive Fathers were alive again, they would now with as much earnestness dissuade laymen from reading the Scripture, as they formerly exhorted them to it? Had he done thus, he had spoken to the purpose: but alas! we find nothing of this, nor any thing like it.

What then are his reasons? You shall now hear: and I shall endeavour to represent them to the best advantage, without abating one grain of their just weight. They are all reducible to this one general head, *viz.* The mischiefs that arise from the promiscuous reading of the Scripture; several of which he mentions, and insists upon; and then acquaints us with the reasons (as he supposes) of those mischiefs. That therefore my discourse upon them may be the more clear and distinct, I shall divide it into these three parts.

1. I shall consider the general reason.
2. The particulars he insists upon.
3. The reasons he gives why these mischiefs flow from the free reading of the Bible.

SECT. I.

The general reason he gives of this restraint is: the mischiefs that arise from the promiscuous reading of the Bible: "Since these, and infinite other mischiefs arise from the free permitting the Bible among the multitude, he (*viz.* the Papist) thinks it commendable in his Church, out of a true solicitude for the salvation of souls, to prevent those evils, by teaching the true sense of this sacred volume—without leaving the book to be scanned

by them as they please ; and so not permitting them to turn the food of their souls into poison, or abuse that to their destruction, which was ordained by Christ for their gaining of heaven.”* But if out of pure kindness to the souls of the vulgar, they take away this dangerous book from them ; why do they give them other very perilous books in the room of it ? I mean images (which they call laymen’s books), though by the confession of many of their own writers, they are horribly abused by the vulgar. But to pass that :

This is the argument they commonly insist upon, and though it hath been wretchedly baffled again and again, yet for want of better, it is upon every occasion dressed up anew, and urged with as brisk a confidence, as if it had never before been heard of.

He says, he “does sincerely respect, honour and reverence the Scriptures.”† But methinks he expresses his respect and reverence, as untowardly, as the Lindians did toward their god Hercules, whom they worshipped by throwing stones at him. For what is this, but to say that the Bible is the most dangerous book in the world ? Since a layman cannot read it, without danger of being eternally undone by it : and if this be to honour and reverence the Scripture, I know not what it is to revile it.

The Representer will say this is a false inference. I shall be glad if he can make that appear, for nothing seems to follow more naturally from the premises. He will say, he does not impute these mischiefs to the Scripture itself, but to men’s abuse of it.† What then ? The danger is not the less, if it be so apt to be abused, that scarce any man can read it who will not so abuse it. Let us suppose there are two things, the one of which is an excellent antidote, if rightly used, but so hard a matter it is so to use it, that not one in an hundred can be found to whom it doth not turn to poison : the other is itself a rank poison, yet may be so tempered, and taken with that caution, that it may become an antidote : is not now this antidote (however excellent in itself) as dangerous as the poison ?

But if these mischiefs proceed merely from men’s abuse of Scripture, why is it then denied to those who do not thus abuse it ? For in that he says, “such as for the MOST PART are not capable of reading it as they ought, have not leave to read

* Chap. 7. p. 52.

† Chap. 6. p. 44.

‡ Chap. 7. p. 52.

it ; and those that are capable, may have IN MOST COUNTRIES, leave to read it as they please : ” * he plainly grants, that some have not leave to read it, who are capable of reading it as they ought, that in some countries they cannot obtain this leave, though they never so much desire it. Where, by “capable of reading as they ought,” he must (if he speak sense) mean those who will not abuse it ; though it is a great mistake to confound these two, as if they were the same, when they are as different, the one from the other, as a sick man is from one that is not capable of being well ; and therefore, to say that a man who abuses the Scripture, is not capable of reading it as he ought, is as absurd as that a sick man is not capable of recovering his health. Were indeed all those that abuse the Scripture, incapable of reading it to good purpose, I should not deny, but they might, with good reason be deprived of it : but if they must be denied it for no other reason but because they abuse it, then let all men be deprived of their eyes, their ears, their tongues, &c. there being no man by whom these are not more or less abused : yea, let not only some, but every man in the world, be denied the reading of the Scripture ; because (I fear) there is scarce any man who is most careful to avoid it, but he may some time or other, through weakness or ignorance, abuse it.

It is therefore certain, that a man ought not for every abuse to be deprived of this privilege : and if for any of those mentioned by the Representer, our blessed Saviour and his Apostles were much to blame, who put all men indifferently upon the study of the Scripture, notwithstanding all these abuses were as high in their time, as they have been in any age since. Did I say not for every abuse ? I will add, *not for any abuse*, unless there can be any that God did not foresee ; for since, notwithstanding any such abuse, he gave free liberty to all men, who can deny it to any, unless they will take upon them to correct God ?

And yet when all is done ; in case men are to be denied the reading of the Scripture because they abuse it, then those above all others ought to be denied it who most extravagantly abuse it. I mean those, who prove the Pope is as much greater than the Emperor as the sun is greater than the moon, from Gen. i. 16 : “ God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.” That

in the Church's power are two swords. the temporal and the spiritual; from that speech of St. Peter to Christ, "Behold, here are two swords." That the Pope is an absolute universal sovereign; because Christ said to St. Peter, "feed my sheep." That a married man cannot please God, because St. Paul saith, "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." And to give one instance in the subject we are now upon; that no unlearned man may presume to meddle with the Scripture, because God commanded, "that if a beast touched the mountain, it should be stoned, or thrust through with a dart." Did ever men more abuse the Scripture than those, who for bad purposes put such absurd ridiculous senses upon it? And yet these are the men who have taken upon them to be the only infallible interpreters of it. Let all impartial men then judge, who best deserves to be forbidden to read it, whether his Holiness, or an honest mechanic? The truth is, the Pope and his clergy have set up a worldly religion, so directly opposite to that of Christ, that the heretical Scriptures, however tortured, will never be brought to a compliance with. The mischiefs they talk of that arise from the vulgar, are but pretended; the mischiefs that come to themselves thereby, are those they are indeed afraid of; as was plainly confessed to Pope Julius III. by those bishops assembled at Bononia, to consult about the establishment of the Roman Church.*

I shall not insist upon it, that the Representer is so intent upon the mischiefs, that he quite forgets the benefits which arise from reading the Scriptures, and those many intolerable mischiefs which flow from the neglect of it; which the ancient Fathers have largely insisted upon. "The reading of the Divine Scriptures," says St. Chrysostom, "is a spiritual meadow, a paradise of delights; a better paradise of delight than that other Paradise. God hath planted this Paradise not in the earth, but in the souls of believers: he hath placed it not in Eden, or towards the east, confining it to one place, but hath extended it to the ends of the world.—Here is no serpent, it is a place free from wild beasts, and fenced with the grace of the Holy Spirit.—And this Paradise hath a fountain as the other had, a fountain from which not only four, but myriads of rivers flow:—Would you know the nature of it? know it from its use. It is not profitable to this present life,

* Verger. Consil. de Rom. Eccles. stabilienda. [Fol. 101. p. 2. Tubing. 1563.]

but to the life eternal. Let us spend our time in this Paradise, let us sit by this fountain, let us abide in the reading of these Scriptures. For as those that sit by a fountain, and enjoy that cool refreshing air, and when the sun grows hot, dipping their face continually, do drive away the stifling heat, and easily cure their troublesome thirst: so he that sits by the fountain of the Divine Scriptures, if the flame of lust annoy him, bathing his soul in these waters, he may easily extinguish it. If fierce anger molest him, inflaming his heart as a boiling cauldron; by instilling a little of this water, he may presently repress the importunity of the passion; and from all evil cogitations the reading of the Divine Scriptures delivers the soul. For which reason, the great Prophet David, knowing the advantage that comes by reading the Scriptures, compares the man who constantly attends to the Scriptures, to a plant placed by the rivers of waters, which always flourishes. For as that tree is not hurt by unseasonable air, or by the scorching rays of the sun: so that soul that stands by the flowings of the Divine Scriptures, and is continually watered by them, is unconquerable; if sickness, loss, false accusation, revilings,—yea, if all the evils in the world assault such a soul, he easily repels all perturbations of mind, having sufficient consolation from the reading of the Scriptures.”* If any man list to see more to this purpose, let him consult the sermon. And as the benefits are many and so great that a man may reap from the reading of the Scripture, so the same St. Chrysostom tells us, that myriads of mischiefs spring from the neglect of it;† many of which he hath given us a particular account of in several of his sermons.

SECT. II.

Let us now consider what these mischiefs are, the Representer makes such a noise about. Besides those mentioned by him, he says, there are “infinite other.”‡ Those “infinite other,” I can say nothing to, because I know not what they are: if he please to tell us some of them (for we cannot expect he should enumerate all, because they are infinite) they shall be considered. All those he is pleased to mention are of the same kind, *viz.* the divisions that are among Christians from

* De utilitate lectionis Script. [vol. 3. p. 71. Par. 1721.]

† Proœm. in Epist. ad Rom. [vol. 9. p. 426. Par. 1731.]

‡ Page 52.

the different senses they put upon the Scripture, thereby making as many Bibles as there are men. "The unhappy divisions," says he, "which are among Christians, sufficiently inform him, that to such readers as St. Peter calls unwary and ignorant, however wise they may think themselves, Arianism may be as obvious in this book, as Christ's divinity; and that when such an one undertakes the interpretation of it, it is an hazard whether at the end, he comes out Quaker, Anabaptist, Presbyterian, Independent, Muggletonian, Socinian, or Atheist: it is a venture whether the Trinity shall have place in his Creed or no: whether he will allow of baptism or any sacrament; and whether cruelty, cutting of throats, oppression, tyranny, dethroning of kings, and murder of princes, shall not with him become a necessary duty, and a true serving of the Lord," &c.* And in another place, the reason he gives, why the holy Scriptures are not generally allowed to the vulgar, is this: "that there may not be as many different Bibles among them, as there are heads:"† which is in effect the same with the former. And in a third; "that it is not only thus in SEVERAL PEOPLE, but even the same PERSON many times hath the faculty of multiplying the Word of God."‡ That is, by reading the Scriptures, men are not only divided one from another, but the same person is at different times, divided from himself, by putting one sense upon them at one time, and another at another.

I shall observe one thing by the way, before I come to expose the folly of this way of reasoning. Had not this gentleman vainly presumed, that the vulgar of our communion are as ignorant as those of his own, in other countries, he would not have laid so great stress upon these words of St. Peter (the unlearned and unstable), and repeated them thrice within the compass of one half sheet (though perhaps for a disguise in the words now cited, he puts "unwary and ignorant," instead of "unlearned and unstable") since they are so far from proving what he designs, that they are a fair argument for the contrary. For, as I before observed, could the unlearned have wrested the Scriptures, had they not read them? And if because they wrested them, they were to be forbidden to read them, would not the Apostle (when the matter required it) have told them so, and given this in charge to the pastors of the Church? Had he been of the same judgment with his

* Page 52.

† Page 54.

‡ Chap. 9. p. 57.

successors at Rome, for the last three or four hundred years, was it possible he should have forgotten this? I appeal to the Representer's own conscience: does he think it was St. Peter's intention, that this Epistle of his should not be read by those to whom he wrote it? If not, he intended it should be read by the vulgar, for it is certain it was written to such.

I shall now proceed to the particular consideration of these mischiefs. Which, though all (as I said before) of the same kind; yet because to make the greater show, the Representer hath put them into a different dress of words, and discoursed of them apart in three several chapters,* lest I should be thought to wave any thing material to this purpose, I shall also speak to them severally, and they are these:

I. *The many divisions that are among Christians.*†

II. *As many different Bibles as there are different heads.*‡

III. *Not only several people, but even the same person, many times, has the faculty of multiplying the Word of God.*§

I. *Mischief.* Having just before spoken of the many unhappy divisions among Christians, he says, "that these and infinite other mischiefs arise from the free permitting the Bible among the multitude."|| Now if he speaks to the purpose, his meaning must of necessity be, that "all these many unhappy divisions" arise from this cause only, or at least from this cause principally. And, therefore, no more is here needful than to discover the falseness of this assertion. However, I shall be more liberal, and shew these two things: 1. that what is here affirmed is notoriously false. 2. That in case it were true, it would not be of force to infer the conclusion, viz. "that the reading of the Bible ought to be denied to the vulgar."

First, It is notoriously false, that "all the unhappy divisions among Christians take their rise, either ONLY or CHIEFLY, from the free permitting of the Bible among the multitude." This will be evident by considering these five things.

1. That there were divisions among the ancient guides or pastors of the Church.

2. That there have been, and still are divisions, yea, as many among the learned of the Church of Rome as among the Protestants.

3. That the learned Romanists are divided among them-

* Chap. 7, 8, 9.

† Chap. 7. p. 52.

‡ Chap. 8. p. 54.

§ Chap. 9. p. 57.

|| Page 52.

selves in all those points in which they are divided from Protestants.

4. That those very pernicious doctrines and practices, which the Representer himself mentions, are derived from the learned, and especially from the learned of the Church of Rome. And therefore,

5. That the divisions among the vulgar, for the most part, are not owing to themselves, but to the learned.

1. There were divisions among the ancient guides and pastors of the Christian Church, and in matters of as great moment as those are in which the Protestants are divided. As between St. Irenæus and Victor, St. Cyprian and Stephen, St. Chrysostom and Theophilus, St. Jerome and Ruffinus, St. Cyril and Theodoret, the bishops of the Council of Nice, and those also of Sardica, &c. I wish those divisions, and many other among the ancient bishops, were not too well known to need any proof. Now can the Representer say, that these divisions sprang from permitting the Bible to the multitude? I trow not.

2. There have been, and still are divisions, yea, as many among the learned of the Church of Rome as among the Protestants. Almost every schoolman is the head of a sect; and the controversies between the Lutherans and the Calvinists are not so many as between the Thomists and the Scotists. The dissensions between the regular and secular priests, have lasted already for some ages, and are likely still to continue; so many several orders, so many sects in religion, you may find among the Regulars; and the Remonstrants and Antiremonstrants, will as soon unite, as the Dominicans with the Jesuits or the Franciscans. Yea, the Popes themselves (the centre of their unity) are often divided among themselves, and their definitions plainly contradictory one to another. Witness Pope Gregory I. and Pope Boniface III. The former condemned the title of Universal Bishop as abominable and antichristian,* the latter ambitiously affected and obtained it from the tyrant Phocas.† Pope Innocent I. held the eucharist was necessary for infants.‡ Pope Pius IV. denounced an anathema

* Lib. 4. Epist. 32, 33, [34,] 36, 38. [Ut supra, lib. 5. Ep. 20. 21. 43. 18. vol. 2. p. 747. 750. 770. 741.]

† Plat. in Vit. Bonifacii III. [p. 102. Lond. 1685.] Sabellic. Ennead. 8. l. 6.

‡ Aug. Contr. duas Epist. Pelag. 1. 2. c. 4. [Ibid. vol. 10. p. 435.] Bini Concil. tom. 1. p. 769.

against those who held it.* And certainly, neither do these divisions take their rise from the reading of the Bible by the common people.

3. The learned Romanists are divided among themselves in all those points of doctrine in which they are divided from Protestants. I shall instance in some, *viz.* the Pope's infallibility and universal pastorship; his power over princes, and dominion in temporals; the canon of Scripture, and traditions of the Church; the sacrifice of the mass, and communion in one kind; the worship of images, and invocation of saints; the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences; to which I shall add but one more, *viz.* transubstantiation: though they seem pretty well agreed to burn or hang those that deny it, yet there is not one question about it in which they are at an agreement among themselves. To borrow the words of a learned bishop of the Church of Ireland. "No sooner," says he, "was this fatal sentence given (he means the definition of transubstantiation in the Lateran Council) but as if Pandora's box had been newly set wide open, whole swarms of noisome questions and debates did fill the schools. Then it began to be disputed by what means this change comes; whether by the benediction of the elements, or by the repetition of those words of Christ, **THIS IS MY BODY**? Then was the question started, what the demonstrative pronoun **HOC** signifies in these words, **THIS IS MY BODY**? Whether this thing, or this substance, or this bread, or this body, or this meat, or these accidents, or that which is contained under these species, or this *individuum vagum*, or lastly (which seems stranger than all the rest) this nothing? &c. Then it began to be argued, whether the elements were annihilated? Whether the matter and form of them being destroyed, their essence did yet remain? Or the essence being converted, the existence remained?—Then the schoolmen began to wrangle, what manner of change this was? Whether a material change, or a formal change, or a change of the whole substance both matter and form? And if it were a conversion of the whole substance, then whether it was by way of production, or by abduction? &c."† This is only a short taste of what the reader may find in the book quoted in the margin.

Nor do they only quarrel about the manner, but some of

* Conc. Trid. Sess. 21. Can. 4. [Labbe, vol. 14. p. 848.]

† Bp. Bramh. Answ. to the Epist. of M. de la Militiere [vol. 1. p. 14. Oxf. 1842.]

their greatest men do not believe, and others plainly deny the article itself; as any one may see, who will but take the pains to consult the learned preface to a discourse of the holy eucharist, in the two great points, &c., and a treatise written by an author of the communion of the Church of Rome, touching transubstantiation. It is probable, that if all the disputes, upon all points controverted among Protestants, were put together, they would not amount to a greater number than those of the Papists in this one article.

To conclude this: let any learned Romanist tell me what his judgment is in any one point controverted between them and us, and I will engage, upon short warning, to produce another learned Romanist who shall contradict him. And, are not men so entirely united in judgment among themselves, excellently qualified to upbraid Protestants with their divisions!

4. In that he says, "To such readers as St. Peter calls unwary and ignorant, Arianism may be as obvious in this book as Christ's divinity:" it is a sign that he expected no other than such "unwary and ignorant readers." For he must be ignorant indeed in these matters, who does not know, that not the ignorant, but the learned; not the laity, but the clergy, were the persons to whom Arianism was in this book so obvious: witness the Councils of Sirmium, of Milan, and Ariminum. I need not tell him, that one or two of the bishops of Rome, either grossly dissembled, or Arianism was for a time more obvious to them in this book than Christ's divinity.

And whereas he says, that "when such an one (*viz.* one that is unwary and ignorant) undertakes the interpretation of this book, it is a hazard, whether in the end he comes out Quaker, Anabaptist, Presbyterian, Independent, Muggletonian, Socinian, or Atheist." He had spoken nearer the truth, if he had said, when such an one takes this book, as interpreted to him by a Popish priest or Jesuit, in the disguise of a Quaker, Anabaptist, &c. We know who have been employed to sow and foment divisions among us, to draw our people into separated meetings, upon the pretence of a more pure and spiritual way of worship. We can tell him of great numbers instructed in handicraft trades, trained up to dispute, one for Presbytery, another for Independency, a third for Anabaptism, sent over hither by order from Rome; so that when the deluded people have thought they had heard a gifted tradesman, they have heard a Romish priest in that disguise. We can acquaint

him with those who have been detected exercising their talents in several sorts of meetings.

But that which follows is most surprising: that "it is a venture, whether cruelty, cutting of throats, oppression, tyranny, dethroning of kings, murder of princes, shall not with him (*viz.* the ignorant reader) become a necessary duty, and a true serving of the Lord." This, I say, is most surprising; and doubtless he rubbed his forehead hard before he wrote it, since he knows, that all these have, for some hundreds of years, been taught and practised by the greatest men of his own Church; and therefore, it is not a venture, but beyond all peradventure, that when place and time serve, they will be so again. He well knows what the great cardinals, Bellarmine, Baronius, Perron, &c. What the learned Jesuits, Suárez, Lessius, Azorius, &c.; what his own countrymen, Cardinal Allen, Father Parsons, Creswell, &c., have written for the deposing and murdering of kings. He knows what Pope Gregory VII., Gregory IX., Innocent III., Innocent IV., Boniface VIII., Paul III., Pius V., Sixtus V., Gregory XIII., have not only taught, but acted in pursuance of these doctrines. He knows there was a "holy league" among those who had not the Bible in their banners, as well as a "solemn league and covenant" among those who had. And he knows, or, at least, may soon know, if he please, that the chief weapons of the rebellion in forty-two, were fetched from Rome; I mean the arguments by which the people were stirred up to rebel, were transcribed from Popish writers, particularly from Mariana and Parsons, out of whom, he may see in some books then published, whole leaves together translated. And therefore,

5. The divisions among the vulgar, are very rarely in comparison owing to themselves; they are not to be imputed to the different senses, which they themselves, in their private reading, put upon the Bible, but, for the most part, to the different senses they receive of it from their teachers. For the truth of which I appeal to history, and to the common observation of mankind. If the Representer be not satisfied with this, I desire him to answer but this one question: whence came it to pass, that so many of the vulgar in England, France, Germany, the Netherlands, &c. divided themselves from the Church of Rome, before they had the Bible in a language they understood? That division could not proceed from their reading of the Bible, which was made before they had

ever read it. I cannot imagine what answer he can give, but that they followed their leaders, Wickliff, Luther, Zuinglius, &c. who first dividing from the Church of Rome, drew the people after them. The division therefore took its rise from the learned, and from them descended to the ignorant.

The Trent Fathers, therefore, were miserably mistaken, in denying the Bible to the laity only; they should have decreed in the first place, that no clergyman should be suffered to read it (that there might be like people, like priest). And this the more prudent bishops at Bononia were aware of, when they advised Julius III. "not to permit any mortal to read more of the Gospels than that little which is contained in the mass."* I need say no more to expose the falsehood of this assertion, that the divisions among Christians, proceed solely or chiefly, from permitting the Bible among the vulgar. But,

2. If this were true, yet it would not be a sufficient reason for denying the reading of the Bible to the vulgar. For if it were so now, it would have been so heretofore; it would have been so in the early ages of the Christian Church, when there were as many sects and heresies as there are now: it would have been so in the time of the Apostles, for in almost every Church planted by them, divisions presently sprang up: it would have been so in the Jewish Church, for they had their sects as well as the Christians: yea, it would have been so from the very beginning, when the Scripture was first published.

But when the Bible was first written, had this been a sufficient reason, would God have caused it to be written in the vulgar language of that people to whom it was given, and laid his command upon all without distinction, to apply themselves to the study of it? And in the succeeding ages of the Jewish Church, yea, after the Babylonian captivity (though some new sects then sprang up among them) so far was it from being thought a reason, why they should not read the law, that by the laws of that nation, every man was obliged to write a copy of the law for himself, with his own hand. And if the case had been altered in the days of our Saviour, would he not have told us? Would he never have reproved the prying multitude (as the Representer is pleased to compliment the people),

* Consil. de Rom. Eccles. stabiliend. apud Vergerium, Tom. 1. [ut supra.]

for reading the law and the prophets? Nay, would he have put them upon the reading of them, as he plainly does, as oft as in his discourses to the people he quotes them for the proof of what he says? And had his Apostles after him thought this a fit expedient, either for the prevention or cure of divisions, when they wrote their Epistles to those Churches, in which divisions were already sown (as the Churches of Corinth and Colosse), would they have addressed them to all without exception, and exhorted all, that "the word of God dwell in them richly?" And when, in succeeding ages, the Church was miserably rent with schisms, do any of the Fathers prescribe this remedy? Nay, though St. Jerome, St. Austin, and St. Chrysostom, &c. sadly complain of the abuse of Scripture by heretics, yet do they not exhort all sorts of persons to read it? In a word, the Church of Rome itself did not think this a fit expedient, till it was so changed from what it was in the beginning, that if St. Peter and St. Paul should have been raised again from the dead, they would not have owned it for that Church which they at first planted. I have, I think, said more than enough, to the first mischief.

II. *Mischief.* The second (which he gives as the main reason, why the holy Scripture is not allowed to the vulgar of his Church without exception) is this: "That if this be allowed, there will be as many different Bibles among them, as there are heads:"* that is, the words of the Bible will be understood by them, in as many different senses as there are men. For he thus explains himself: "Though the book of the Scriptures does certainly contain the word of God, yet to every Christian that reads it, it is the sense and meaning, and not the letter, is more properly the word of God. Now do you but reflect in how many different senses the letter of the Bible is understood, and so many different Bibles will you find multiplied by your followers: and tell me, upon examination, whether this be much fewer than heads?"† So wonderfully pleased is he with this conceit, that he presently falls into a fit of raillery. "Do not you think there would be a pretty variety of Bibles? There would be this man's Bible, and that man's Bible; such an one's Bible, and such an one's Bible, infinite number of Bibles."

But I fear I shall quickly spoil his mirth.

I shall not insist upon it; that every difference in sense

* Chap. 8. p. 54.

† P. 54.

makes not a difference of Bibles, as long as there is an agreement in all things material, in those points, which by all the differing parties are acknowledged sufficient to salvation. I need not beg this, because they themselves are forced to assert it in their own defence : for they acknowledge, that the vulgar Latin translation of the Bible differs in many places from the original ; that before Pope Clement's edition, there were many various readings : that the Bibles set forth by Sixtus and Clement are different each from other in many places : and yet they say, "they are not to be reckoned different Bibles, because they do not differ in anything material to the faith."

This being premised, I return to his argument, which in short is this : "If the holy Scripture should be generally allowed to the vulgar, without exception, they will every one understand them in a different sense."* Therefore they ought not to be thus allowed.

Now in that he says generally, and without exception, he supposes, that if they be allowed to the vulgar, not generally, but with an exception, they to whom they are so allowed will not make them so many different Bibles : from whence it plainly follows, that if they should be allowed to all, without exception, yet many of that all will understand them in the same sense, which overthrows his universal conclusion, *viz.* "That there will be as many different Bibles as heads." But I pass this ; nor shall I stay to shew, first, that the antecedent is notoriously untrue. Secondly, that if it were true, yet the same mischief will follow, if the vulgar be taught the Bible by their pastors (as he says, they are in the Church of Rome), because they may put as many different interpretations upon their words, as upon the words of the Bible. But shall content myself to return these three things in answer to the argument, which will sufficiently expose its absurdity.

First, That it is of equal force against the reading of the Bible by the learned, yea, of much greater. The reason is plain, because the learned are those especially who expound the Bible to different senses. The most zealous Papist, if he please to follow the Representer's direction, shall find this is as evident as demonstration. Let him first ask twenty laymen what is the meaning of such a text, and write down each man's sense at length as he delivers it, in one column ; then

* Ibid.

let him consult twenty of the most learned Popish commentators, upon the same text, and write down what each of them says in another; then let him compare all the laymen's senses together, and observe all the differences that are between them: let him then compare all the learned commentators senses together, and observe likewise all the differences between them; then let him compare the differences between the vulgar, with those between the learned, and if he find not the former fewer and less material than the latter, I shall own that I am mistaken.

I add, that if the understanding some places of Scripture in a different sense makes different Bibles, then St. Cyprian and St. Stephen, St. Austin and St. Jerome, St. Cyril and Theodoret, yea, all the learned Fathers of the primitive Church, had different Bibles, and therefore (if this argument signify anything) ought not to have been suffered to read the Scripture. The absurdity of which will yet be more manifest, because,

Secondly, Where the vulgar are not permitted to read the Bible, there are as many different Bibles (in the Representer's sense) as where they are: even in the Church of Rome, there are as many, I may truly say, many more than among the Protestants. The Thomists have one Bible, the Scotists another; the Franciscans one, the Dominicans another; the Jesuits one, the Jansenists another: the Scotists' Bible teaches that original sin is nothing but the privation of original righteousness; the Thomists' Bible teaches it is more: the Franciscans find in their Bible the immaculate conception of the blessed Virgin; the Dominicans find no such matter in theirs; the Jansenists' Bible gives to God alone the praise of converting grace; the Jesuits' Bible gives it to God, and themselves too. In many of their Bibles, transubstantiation is as legible as these words, "This is my body;" in many others, no such doctrine appears.

Yea, the very Popes themselves (in spite of their infallibility) have Bibles not only different, but plainly contradictory. Pope Gregory I.'s Bible taught him that the Emperor was his lord; Pope Gregory VII.'s that the Emperor was his vassal. Yea, some of their Bibles have taught them to be downright heretics; so did Pope Honorius's and John XXIII.'s. And which is yet worse, not only their Popes, but their Councils too, have had different Bibles, as might be shewed at large, if it were needful. Yea, if that be

true which a great Cardinal has affirmed ; “ That the precepts of Christ may be changed by the Church, and at one time be interpreted to this sense, and at another time to that ; ” * then the Church of Rome may, every age or every year, have a different Bible.

And whereas the Representer grants, that the Protestants have all the same Bible in their hands, though it be different in their heads : those of the Church of Rome have in their hands in one age, one Bible ; in another age, another. In this and the age next foregoing, the books of the Maccabees have been part of the Bible in their hands, which certainly were not so in the age of Gregory the Great. †

I further add, that their agreement about the sense of the Council of Trent, is as little, as about the sense of the Scripture. Soto's Council of Trent, and Catharinus's Council of Trent ; Bellarmine's Council of Trent, and the Bishop of Meaux's Council of Trent, are so far from being the same, that they are in many things directly opposite. And therefore,

3. To retort the argument : How shamefully does the Representer delude the poor vulgar, in persuading them, that though they do not read the Bible, yet the very same word of God is delivered to them by their teachers ; whereas, when it comes to be examined, it is not the Word of God, but their teachers' imaginations they are guided by. To convince him of this by his own experiment. Let him take all the different senses their teachers put upon the Scripture, and carry them to any licenser of his own Church, in order to be printed and published as the Word of God, and rule of faith, and see if he can find any who will set them forward with an imprimatur. What an unchristian imposture is it then, to let so many poor souls go on with a secure confidence of following the word of God, when what they follow is nothing better than the imaginations and dreams of their priests ? Let now the Representer judge, to whose shame the droll is exposed, and if he please, let him still go on to upbraid the Protestants with their different Bibles.

III. *Mischief*. But the Representer will go further with us. “ For it is not only thus,” says he, “ in several people, but

* Card. Cusan. Epist. 2. de usu Communionis ad Bohem.

† Greg. Moral. Expos. in Job. l. 19. c. 17. [ut supra, c. 21. vol. 2. p. 622.

even the same person many times has the faculty of multiplying the word of God. For how many are there to be found among the vulgar, who, according to their different humours, as their interest changes, according to the different impressions they receive from confidants, especially such as have gained their good opinion, espouse different doctrines and persuasions, and run through as many sects, as there are divisions in the nation? And yet in all their windings, they follow (as they imagine) the Scripture.—Do not you see how, to these same persons the word of God is not always the same? It alters according to seasons and times, and it was one word of God directed them the last year, another this," &c.

Now suppose all this to be true of many of the vulgar, is it not also as true of many of the learned? Yea, of many of the most learned in the Church of Rome? May it not as truly be said, how many may be found among your Bishops, Cardinals, and Popes, who, according to their different humours, as their interest changes, espouse different doctrines and persuasions? Witness in elder times, Pope Liberius and Vigilius, who were either heretics or catholics, as their interest changed. And for later times, witness the Cardinal of Cusa; who one while more zealous than he, for the authority of a General Council above the Pope? But when he expected to be made a cardinal, who more zealous for the contrary doctrine? Upon which, Richerius's words are observable: "By this," saith he, "we are given to know that very many who have defended the truth, in a state of poverty, have deserted the same out of hope of dignities, and a more plentiful fortune; and especially out of an ambition of being made cardinals."* Witness Æneas Sylvius, who vehemently opposed that doctrine, when he was Pope, which he had before as vehemently maintained, when he was clerk to the Council of Basil. And that it was interest that gave him this new light, not I, but Richerius and Maimbourg plainly assert.† Yea, the Pope himself, in his Bull of Retracting, says in effect as much; for speaking of the disputes between him and Juliano, cardinal of St. Angelo, he confesses the doctrine he forsook was the ancient, and that he embraced was new.‡

* Hist. Concil. General. l. 3. p. 479. [Colon. 1681.]

† Richer. Hist. Concil. General. l. 4. parte. 1. c. 6. [Ibid. p. 55.]
Maimb. Prerog. of the Church of Rome. c. 25. p. 338.

‡ Tuebamur antiquam sententiam, ille novam defendebat.

Witness the Cardinal of Lorrain : did not he himself confess, that his interest being turned, he turned with it ?* Was not his persuasion different, according to the different impressions he received from the Pope and the Queen of France ? When he first came to Trent, how contrary his sentiments in several points were to those he had afterward, when the state of affairs in France was altered, and he had been caressed by the Pope, and his Holiness had gained his good opinion, may sufficiently appear, by comparing the places quoted in the margin.†

It is too well known to need to be mentioned, how that Gardiner, Bonner, and all the Popish bishops (Fisher only excepted) espoused different doctrines and persuasions, as their interests changed, and according to the different impressions they received, either from the King or the Pope.

And do not you now see, how to these same Bishops, Cardinals and Popes, the Word of God was not always the same, but altered according to seasons and times ? That it was one Word of God that directed Æneas Sylvius, while he was secretary to the Council of Basil, another, while he was Pope. That in King Henry VIII.'s, and King Edward VI.'s reigns, the King's supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs was in Gardiner's and Bonner's Bibles : in Queen Mary's reign, the Pope's was found instead of the King's. The conclusion hence is unavoidable ; that if all men are to be denied the reading of the holy Scriptures, who according to their different humours, as their interest changes, espouse different doctrines and persuasions, they must be denied to many more than the vulgar, unless their Bishops, Cardinals and Popes are to be placed in that rank.

SECT. III.

In the next place the Representer gives us his reasons, 'why the vulgar so differ in the sense of the Bible, which are two ; one of them implied, the other expressed. That which is implied is the obscurity of the Scripture ; that which is expressed is, " the setting up every man's private reason to be judge of Scripture." ‡

Reason I. The obscurity of the Scripture. " For if it be

* Hist. of the Council of Trent. l. 8. p. 767. [Lond. 1620.]

† Hist. of the Council of Trent, pp. 659, 692, 703, 704, 712, 733, 743, 744, 767, 782, 813.

‡ Chap. ix. p. 58.

so plain and easy," says he, "how comes it there is so little agreement in the understanding it?"

When the Protestants affirm that the Scripture is plain and easy, they mean it is so to those only who read it with honest hearts, who sincerely desire to know the truth, and to direct their lives answerable to it; and they mean that it is so, not simply in all things, but in all things necessary to salvation. And when they affirm this, they affirm no more than St. Austin did: "Believe me," saith he, "whatsoever is in those Scriptures (speaking of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which are more obscure than those of the New), it is high and divine; they contain nothing but what is true, and that doctrine which is most fit for the repairing and restoring of souls, and so disposed, that there is no man but may draw thence that which is sufficient for him, provided he comes devoutly and piously affected, as true religion requires."* They affirm no more than what St. Chrysostom did; for he says, that "all things necessary are manifest."† They affirm no more than what the Bishop of Rome did formerly. For "the holy Scripture," saith Pope Gregory (as I find him quoted by the authors of the preface of the *New Testament*), "is as a great river, which runs always, and which will run to the end of the world. The little children and the men of full stature, the strong and the weak, do there find that living water that springs up even to heaven. It offers itself to all, and it suits itself to all. It hath a simplicity that abases itself to the most simple souls, and a height that exercises and raises the most lofty."‡

Nay, they say no more than what many learned Romanists of this present age have said. The Bishop of Venice, speaking of the New Testament, says, "The Son of God hath in it taken care to teach us CLEARLY and DISTINCTLY, our whole duty to him, as well as our whole duty to our neighbour and ourselves. This is that which the Gospels contain; the Epistles of the Apostles are a comment upon it, and an ex-

* Quicquid est, mihi crede, in Scripturis illis, altum et divinum est; inest omnino veritas, et reficiendis instaurandisque animis accommodatissima disciplina: et plane ita modificata, ut nemo inde haurire non possit, quod sibi satis est, si modo ad hauriendum devotè accipit, ut vera Religio poscit, accedat. De utilitate credendi. c. 6. [ut supra, vol. 8. p. 54].

† Πάντα τὰ ἀναγκαῖα δῆλα. Hom. 3. in 2. ad Thess. [ut supra, vol. 11. p. 528. Par. 1734.]

‡ P. 9.

plication more enlarged and distinct, which leave not anything in the Christian life we ought to live upon earth unexplained.* And Mr. Arnaud says, "That the holy Fathers have noted, that one of those things which shew the Divinity of the holy Scriptures, and in which they excel all the writings of men, is this, that they are equally accommodated to the learned and the ignorant, to little children and to grown men, to the weak and to the perfect, to the shallow and the more profound wits."†

But the Representor asks: "If the Scripture be so plain and easy, how comes it there is so little agreement in the understanding it? How are there so many different and contrary divisions, sects and persuasions in this one nation? How comes it, that even in the essentials of Christianity, concerning the Trinity, &c. there has been, and at present is so great diversity among those that read the Scripture?" I answer,

1. That the agreement among Protestants is not so little as he pretends. That the Reformed Churches agree in all essential points of faith, any man may be satisfied, who will take the pains to read over the Harmony of their Confessions. But,

2. Let the disagreement be more or less, it proceeds not from the obscurity of the Scriptures. This is evident, because the disagreement among those that read the Scripture is as great in those things that are most plainly, as in those that are more obscurely delivered. Can anything be more plain, than these words of Christ concerning the cup, "Drink ye all of it?"‡ Or those of St. Paul, in which he applies this drinking to the lay-Corinthians?§ Suppose it was Christ's intention that the laity should partake of the cup, as well as the bread; would not those men who do not see it in these words, in whatsoever words he had expressed it have found out another meaning? It is plain then, that it is not the obscurity of the text, from whence this diversity of interpretation arises. But,

2. To gratify the Representor, I will plainly tell him what it is. 1. In those who have different lusts and interests to serve, it is their different lusts and interests with which the Scriptures must be forced to comply. 2. In those who are

* Preface of Mr. Arnaud. [ut supra, p. 3.] *

† De la Lect. de l'Ecriture sainte, l. 2. c. 6. [Ibid. p. 122.]

‡ Matth. xxvi. 27.

§ 1 Cor. xi. 25.

sincere, and do not profess contrary to their belief, it is the different prejudice or principle they are possessed with. Though the Scripture speaks never so plainly against the doctrine and worship of such a sort of men, yet if it be inconsistent with that which they have laid for the main principle and foundation of their faith, they can never persuade themselves that the words are to be taken according to the most common and obvious sense, but must find out some other meaning for them. For instance, it is a principle with Romanists that their Church cannot err: let therefore Scripture be never so express against the worship of images, against transubstantiation, against communion in one kind, against the propitiatory sacrifice of the mass, against prayer in an unknown tongue, yet they must of necessity conclude, that it does not mean what it seems to say, because if it should, it unavoidably follows that their Church hath grossly erred, which, according to their principle, is as impossible as that the truth and promise of God should fail. And that it is indeed this principle, and not the obscurity of the Scripture, that makes the difference in many texts between them and us, is evident enough by this consideration, *viz.* that they cannot see that in the plainest words that is contrary to their principle; whereas in words not only obscure, but most remote and impertinent, they can see that which is agreeable thereto.

1. They cannot see that in the plainest words that is contrary to their principle. If to worship an image be unlawful, their Church hath erred; therefore they cannot see it is forbid in the second commandment; though it is hard to conceive that other words can be used more full to that purpose. For be it "graven image," or "graven thing," or "idol" that is forbidden, it matters not; since the similitude or "likeness of anything in heaven above, or in the earth beneath," &c. is forbidden also.

2. But see now, how they can find that in the most remote and impertinent text, that is agreeable to their principle. Would you have a Scripture for the worship of images? Bel-larmine gives you Matth. v. 34, 35: "Swear not by the heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth, for it is his footstool."* If you think this not clear enough, take 2 Tim. iii. 15: "Thou hast known the holy Scriptures from a child."† The

* De Imagin. Sanctorum, l. 2. c. 12. [vol. 2. p. 446. col. 1. Prag. 1721.]

† Ibid.

Scriptures are called "*holy* Scriptures," therefore the images of Christ and of his saints are to be worshipped. Here is a demonstration as bright as midnight. He must be stark blind, or shut his eyes hard, who can avoid its light. I omit many other instances which are ready at hand. By these now mentioned, it is manifest enough, that men's disagreement about the sense of Scripture, doth not proceed from its obscurity, but from the different principles or prejudices they are prepossessed with. Better would it be for the Church of Rome, were it more obscure in many points than it is: and were it but as clear for them as it is against them, they would not then complain of its obscurity, or prohibit the vulgar the reading of it.

II. But "the Protestants are for setting up every man's private reason to be judge of Scripture." What? To be judge of what in Scripture ought to be received, and what rejected, as the Socinians do? This is a very disingenuous misrepresentation. Much more remote from truth is it, "that they are far worse in this than the rankest Socinian in the world."* The Protestant, he very well knows, being satisfied by his reason concerning the Divine authority of the Scripture, he firmly assents to whatsoever he finds delivered in it, though he be not able to conceive how it should be. He indeed uses his reason in judging of the sense of Scripture, which he must of necessity do, or else he can have no reason to believe it in a true, rather than a false sense: but having to the best of his understanding found out the meaning of it, he makes neither common nor private reason the measure of what is to be received, so as to admit nothing into his faith, but what he is able fully to understand. Though he meets with some things which are above his capacity, yet he does not say as Socinus, speaking of Christ's satisfaction, "If the very word were in Scripture, not once, but often, yet I would not believe it;" but thinks he has the greatest reason in the world to believe them, because God has delivered them. And that some things in Scripture are above his capacity; this, he thinks, is so far from being a discouragement, that it is rather a motive to his faith; for he might be tempted to suspect the divinity of the Scriptures, if he found nothing in them above the reach of his own little understanding, either at first to find out, or afterward to comprehend.

And if this be to make private reason the rule of Scripture, we need not be ashamed to own it; for this is no more than what our blessed Saviour allowed to private persons. He frequently appealed to the Scriptures of the Old Testament; but he left it to every man's reason to judge whether they were for him or against him: yea, did he not severely reprove the promiscuous multitude for not judging even of themselves what was right? * For to the multitude (*τοῖς ὄχλοις*, ver. 54.) these words were directed. This is no more than what the Apostles of our Lord have laid as a duty upon private Christians: St. Paul commands them to "prove all things," † and thought the common Christians of the Church of Corinth wise enough to "judge what he said." ‡ St. John requires them to "try the spirits, whether they be of God." § And can they do this if they may not judge of the sense of the Scripture? This is no more than what St. Chrysostom frequently exhorted the people to, and sharply reproved their neglect of it.

Yea, notwithstanding the loud cry they make against private reason and the private spirit, the Roman clergy themselves are forced to appeal to it; for when to draw men over from us to them, they produce so many Scriptures, and so many reasons (such as they are) fetched from Scripture, do they not make every man's reason judge whether these Scriptures and these reasons are to the purpose?

If they say a man must use his reason to judge which is the true Church, but having once found it, he must then take the sense of Scripture upon the Church's word, nothing can be said more absurd; because a man must judge of the sense of the Scripture before he can discern which is the true Church, since that can no otherwise be known than by those characters the Scripture gives of it. Besides, one of their own marks of the true Church is "the holiness of its doctrine." || A man, therefore, must know what the doctrine of a Church is before he can know it to be a true Church; and how shall a man know this, but by first examining her doctrine by Scripture? A man must, therefore, know the sense of Scripture before he can know the true Church. But if it should be granted, that when a man once knows the true Church, he must then under-

* Luke xii. 57.

† 1 Thess. v. 21.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 15.

§ 1 John iv. 1.

|| Bell. de Notis Eccles. l. 4. c. 11. [ut supra, p. 119. col. 1.]

stand the Scripture as the Church does, yet tell me why he must do so? Is it because he hath reason, or no reason, so to do? You will not say, because he hath no reason (for you yourself give reasons why he must); and if it be because he hath reason, he then makes his reason judge of the sense of Scripture, as well as the Protestant.

But "Christian faith," he says, "is but one;" that is granted. And "all Christians are directed to meet in this ONE faith, to be of ONE SPIRIT and ONE MIND, to say all the same thing." This is also granted. "Now can you imagine it possible," says he, "for all Christians to concur in the same belief, while the Scripture being but ONE which they read, their private judgments give *differing* and *contrary* interpretations of it, and carry them several ways?"* And will it be possible for "all Christians to concur in the same belief," if the Scriptures be denied to the vulgar? For do not the private judgments of the clergy give as differing and contrary interpretations of it, and carry them as many several ways? And, therefore, are there not as many divisions among yourselves (as has been shewed) as there are among Protestants? And is it not ridiculous so often to insist upon that as a sovereign remedy of divisions, which is so ineffectual that the disease is as prevalent where it is used as where it is not?

The Representer may perhaps say, that "their differences are not in matters of faith:" if not, then neither are ours, since theirs are in matters as considerable as ours. But the best of it is, if, notwithstanding their differences among themselves, they are still of one faith, then the Protestants also may be of one faith, not only among themselves but with them too, and therefore are no heretics, since Protestants differ no more from them than many of them do one from another.

Though, therefore, it be the duty of Christians to be All of one mind, and to speak the same things; and though I see no reason to question but God hath afforded such helps in order thereunto, which, if they were not wanting to themselves in the use of, they might attain to this unity, yet we have already seen, that the withholding the Scripture from the vulgar is none of those means; and though some, who will be wiser than God, have thought fit to make trial of it, yet they have hitherto found it unsuccessful. And for those means which God hath vouchsafed, as little reason have we to expect

* Chap. 9. p. 58.

that they should by all Christians be faithfully used and applied, and they thereby be brought to this perfect unity, as to expect that all men should become sober, and just, and charitable, and devout, which God has made no less their duty, and for the effecting of which he hath vouchsafed as powerful means.

But now let us again try whether this long harangue be not of equal force against the reading of the Scripture by the learned as by the vulgar.

“ If the different sects in religion proceed from the reading of the Scripture by the vulgar, how comes it that there are so many different and contrary divisions, sects, and persuasions among you Romanists? How comes it that even in those things, that by the differing parties are reckoned matters of faith, there hath been, and at present is, so great diversity? The business is, you suffer every learned man's private reason to be judge of Scripture, which, when put to the test, proves in thousands and thousands to be no better than passion, prejudice, interest, imagination, guessing, or fancy. Do not you find by experience, that there is no proposal made, but presently the learned are divided about it? As they were in almost every question in the Council of Trent; nor could the controversies be decided by the Fathers, but they were forced to make many of their decrees in such general terms (for the gratifying of the contending parties) as might be interpreted to contrary senses? Do not you see, again, that almost every scholar's reason is different, as their capacity, parts, education, temper, inclinations, impressions, are different? That as every one has a head of his own, so he has generally a reason, or way of reasoning, of his own? Nay, are not the learned so inconsistent, even to themselves too, that what is reason to them at one time is unreasonable at another? How, then, can you permit a thing so slippery, so weak, various, wavering, changeable, inconstant, as you see the private reason of the learned is, to be relied on by them, as their guide in expounding of Scripture? How can you imagine it possible for all Christians to concur in the same belief, while the learned, who read and expound the Scripture, give differing and contrary interpretations of it? For as long as the Scripture is no otherwise in their heads and hearts, than by the interpretation they make of it, their faith must necessarily be as various as their interpretation.”

And is not the story of the manna (which follows), as appli-

cable to the learned? "For, was not the taste of the manna as different to the priests as it was to the people? Did it not relish according to that kind of meat that was most grateful to every priest's plate? Now if the priests in Canaan had received a command of bringing forth that sort of meat, whose taste should be like that of the manna they eat in the desert, was it possible they should all agree in their dish, since, though the manna was the same they all fed on, yet the relish was as different as their tempers and palates? Do not you, therefore, see, that men will never be of one spirit and one mind, until the reading of the Scripture be prohibited to the learned; and not to some, but to all, his Holiness, as infallible, only excepted? For if it be allowed to the cardinals (notwithstanding their eminences above others), together with his Holiness, they will never agree in the sense of it; for I can tell you of many cardinals who have differed from his Holiness, and among themselves too, about the sense of it. Is it not, then, as plain as demonstration, that there will be no end of controversies, as long as the Scriptures are read by any man in the world besides the Pope? And perhaps not then, neither; for since he is not infallible but when he speaks from his chair (which seldom happens), at other times he may chance to contradict himself, and give one sense of Scripture this year, another the next. It were, therefore, most advisable (could it possibly be effected) that the book itself were utterly abolished."

Let not any man interpret this to the disparagement of learning, since nothing can be more evident than that the learned have vast advantages above the rest of mankind for attaining to the true meaning of the more obscure texts of Scripture, provided they sincerely search after truth, and are so humble, so sensible of their own liableness to mistake, that they daily implore the Divine assistance; but if they be destitute of these qualifications, they are not only as subject to err, but to err more dangerously than others.

In the beginning of the 10th chapter, the Representer talks again at the same impertinent rate; so agreeable to him is this way of reasoning that he naturally falls into it in every chapter; but the vanity of it lies so open, that it need not be further exposed. If any man please to consult the place, I shall leave it to himself to judge whether it be not every whit as applicable against permitting the Scriptures to the learned as the vulgar.

But the Representer may say, the Church of Rome does not allow the learned to interpret Scripture according to their own private reason; for the Council of Trent has decreed, "That no man presume to interpret Scripture contrary to the sense of the Church, or the unanimous consent of the Fathers."

And has not the Church of England her confession of faith, contrary to which she allows none of her members to interpret Scripture? Does she not admit all such traditional interpretations as can be derived from the fountain? And for all such texts are obscure and doubtful, does she not direct the vulgar to consult their guides? Though it is true, she does not command them to believe that white is black, or that vice is virtue, if the priest says that it is. But, however, the Church of Rome denies them the liberty of interpreting the Scripture in their own sense; it is certain that they commonly take it, else how comes it that they give such different senses of the same Scripture? How comes it that many of the learned expound the sixth chapter of St. John, of the sacramental eating of Christ's flesh; and many as learned as they say, that no such matter is there intended? How comes it, when so many tell us that these words, "This is my body," are so plain for transubstantiation, that he must be quite blind who does not see it? That others, whose sight is as good as theirs, tell us they are not able to see this in them? Do these learned men, in their exposition of the Scripture, give us the sense of the Roman Church, or do they not? If not, they follow their own private reason; if they do, their Church gives contrary senses of Scripture, and is as far from being one in this respect as it is from being Catholic.

He confesses, p. 63, that some of the Protestants, to keep up the face of a Church do speculatively contend for authority and guides: but then he says, "in fact they defeat all these their pretensions." How do they in fact defeat them? Because "they own no authority so great or safe, but it is to be subjected to the control of every private examiner." They own an authority so great, as to matters of external government, as to be subject to the control of no man, who lives in communion with the Church. But he means an authority so great, that whatsoever the Church commands and prescribes to be received, as the truth and faith of Christ, it ought to be received. But can the Church have no authority, unless men are bound to believe, without examination, whatsoever she prescribes to be believed? If so, then had she no authority in our Saviour's and his Apos-

ties' days; no, nor for several ages after them. For if any such authority had been owned in the fourth century, how came it to pass, that after the Nicene Council, the Arian heresy spread more than it had done before?

If this be to open a gate to all the fanaticisms and quakerisms in the world, it is certain the Protestants did not first open it, but it was long before opened by our blessed Saviour, when he gave this command to his disciples; "Call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father which is in Heaven; neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ."* As much as to say, "There is none upon earth, by whose sense a Christian is to be absolutely determined, his faith is not to be resolved into any man's authority."

But "by the Creed, all Christians are bound to believe the holy catholic Church." Yes, that there is such a Church, and that this Church teaches all truths necessary to be known: but it is one thing to believe this, another thing to believe as the Church of Rome doth. And though Protestants never refuse to yield assent to all such doctrines as the Church truly catholic hath in all ages taught, yet they can see no reason to pin their faith upon the Church of Rome; there being as vast a difference between the Church of Rome and the Church catholic, as between the Church of York, and the Church of England.

But St. Paul, Heb. xiii. 17, commands all to obey, and submit to those that are over them. It is true, and I grant, that by those that are over them, He means ecclesiastical superiors. But does not the same St. Paul command children to obey their parents, and servants to obey their masters? Would he therefore have all children and servants to take their faith upon trust from their parents and masters? He also commanded every soul to be subject to the higher powers; and yet I am pretty confident, that his meaning was not that every Christian should then believe as the Roman emperor did.

But he commands to obey and submit, not only as to external government, but as to truth and belief. Then those who had Arian bishops (as a great part of the Church for some time had) were bound to believe that Christ was not God; and those who had Donatist bishops, were bound to believe that the Church of Rome was so far from being the catholic Church that it was not so much as a part of it. But how does the Representor prove, that the people ought absolutely to submit their faith to those that are over them? Because the Apostle

* Matth. xxiii. 9, 10.

says, ver. 7, "whose faith follow." And does he not say, chap. vi. 12, "Be ye followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises?" Are we therefore bound to believe, as every deceased Christian hath believed? In both places the Apostle speaks of Christians departed this life; in the latter, of Christians indifferently, in the former, of Christian bishops: and the words should be rendered, "Remember them which have had the rule over you, which have spoken to you the word of God (such, for instance, as James bishop of Jerusalem, who had witnessed the faith by his death), whose faith follow." And the meaning is this: "Imitate them in their constancy and perseverance in the Christian profession and practice, notwithstanding all the persecutions you meet with in the world."

The "pillar and ground of truth," 1 Tim. iii. 15, may relate either to Timothy himself, or to that summary of Christian doctrine that follows. But suppose it relate to the Church, that particular Church was primarily meant in which Timothy was directed how to behave himself; and I think no Romanist says, that a man is bound to believe as every particular Church believes.

The words of Christ, Matth. xviii. 17: "If he hear not the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican," are also impertinent, because he speaks there, not of matters of faith, but of fact, and directs what course is to be taken for the ending of private quarrels between man and man; though had he spoken of matters of faith, they would not have been to the purpose; because by the Church, can be meant no other than that particular Church of which the offending brother was a member. I need say no more, to shew how un-concluding those reasons are, by which he would persuade us to abandon our reason, and to take the sense of Scripture upon trust from his Church.

CHAP. IV.

I PROCEED now to the fourth and last head, *viz.* the false constructions (as the Representer calls them) which the Protestants make of this practice of the Church of Rome, or the wrong inferences they deduce from it. Which are these three:

1. *That the vulgar Papists are deprived of the word of God.*
2. *That they take up all their belief upon trust.*

3. *That the reason why they are not permitted to read the Bible, is for fear lest they should discover the errors of their religion.*

Whether these are misconstructions, or no, I shall leave the impartial reader to judge, after I shall have considered those reasons by which he endeavours to prove that they are so.

SECT. I.

Inference I. The first Protestant inference is: "That the vulgar Papists are deprived of the word of God, of the food of their souls."* To prevent cavils and evasions, I premise this: the Protestant does not say, that the vulgar Papists have nothing of the Scripture allowed them. He very well knows, that some shreds of it are now and then given them in sermons, and some small parcels of it in their catechisms, and manuals of devotion. But what then? Will it hence follow, that it is false to say, "they are deprived of the Scripture?" Will not every man say, that he is deprived of his father's will, who is allowed no more than the sight of here and there a line transcribed from it? or that a man's inheritance is detained from him, who has no more than a small pension given him out of it?

One may a little wonder, that this should be reckoned a false inference. What! Are they not deprived of the word of God, who are not suffered to read it, or so much as to have it in a language they understand? No, says the Representer; "the vulgar of our communion have more of this holy food, than those of any other persuasion whatsoever."† This is yet more wonderful, that they should not be permitted to have it; and yet, that they should have more of it, than those who have the whole of it in their hands, and daily read it. How shall we unriddle this? Why, "they are taught it by their pastors." Be it so; does it thence follow, that they have more of it than those of other persuasions, who are taught it by their pastors as well as they? For whereas he presently suggests, "that the Protestants are for leaving their pastors, that they may teach themselves;" that is a calumny. Though the Protestants read the Scriptures themselves, yet they do not reject their pastors; they do not think the use of the one does render the other needless now, any more than it did in the first ages of the Christian Church, when they both went together, and were both thought necessary. But that they who are taught it by

* Chap. 6. p 43, 44, 45.

† P. 45.

their pastors only, should have more of it than those who are both taught it by them, and have the whole of it in their own possession, is as true as that a part is more than the whole.

But the Representer will say, "their pastors teach them all that is necessary for them to know." How shall the vulgar know this? We can tell them of pastors who have concealed from their people some of the most necessary points of the Christian faith; but I need not name them to the Representer. But how are the people assured, that what they teach them is indeed the word of God, and not their own inventions, when they are not suffered to examine it? As it was foretold, that false teachers should arise, so every age since hath seen that prediction verified; and for this reason St. John exhorts vulgar Christians, as well as others, to bring their teachers' doctrines to the trial.† Is it necessary, that every one that is commissioned to teach, should be so sincere, as to deliver nothing but what he believes to be the faith of Christ? The Bishop of Minori in the Council of Trent thought otherwise, he was afraid there might be many priests who were real infidels.§ And if the Representer be not satisfied with this, we can produce those in this very age, who have taught that as a necessary article of faith, which they were so far from believing necessary, that they could not persuade themselves it was true.

But if the priest be honest, is he also infallible? This the Representer must suppose, or else he reasons at an absurd rate: for thus he argues; "Was Mary Magdalen deprived of the word of God, who, placed at her Saviour's feet, heard it from his own most sacred mouth? Were those people deprived of the word of God, to whom the Apostles were sent to preach, for those several years, before any of the Gospel was in writing?" It is not writing, we know, that makes it the word of God, for all that word of God that is now written was once unwritten. But, pray, Sir, tell me: Is every thing taught by a priest of the Church of Rome, as certainly the word of God, as that which was taught by our blessed Saviour and his Apostles? Is every parish priest at length become infallible? If so, what a shame is it that any controversies are left among yourselves, when every parish affords an infallible interpreter of Scripture? If not, then they may teach that for the word of God, which is nothing less. However, all that we contend

* St. John iv. 1.

† Hist. of the Council of Trent, l. 2. p. 241. [Lond. 1620.]

for, is that the vulgar may be suffered to read that word which Mary heard, for that she heard was the same that is now written; and had it been then written from Christ's mouth, can any man be so senseless as to imagine, that after he had done speaking, he would have forbidden her, under severe penalties, to read it?

But let us now suppose, that every Roman teacher is both able and sincere; will it hence follow, that the people may not read the Scriptures? Had St. Luke thought so, he would never have commended the Bereans for searching the Scriptures, whether those things that were spoken by St. Paul were so.* Had St. Paul himself thought so, would he have proved what he said by Scripture? (For in doing so, he put his hearers upon the searching it), and thereby taught all succeeding pastors what they ought to do? To which purpose the words of Origen are observable:† "If such and so great an Apostle, did not suppose his authority sufficient warrant to his sayings, unless he made it appear, that what he says is written in the law and the prophets, how much more ought we little ones to observe this, that we do not bring forth ours, but the sentences of the Holy Spirit?" Now I presume it will not be denied, but St. Paul was as faithful and able a teacher as any in the Church of Rome. If it should, yet doubtless it will be granted that our Saviour may compare with the best of them; and he (as we have heard before) frequently sent his hearers to the Scriptures. And if we consult the ancient Fathers, especially St. Chrysostom (who was as diligent a pastor as any the Church can now boast of), we shall find, that notwithstanding his abundant pains in teaching, he vehemently exhorted the people to read the Scriptures themselves, and enforced his exhortation by many powerful arguments. Omitting many others, I shall recite one passage in his 10th Homily, on the first chapter of the Gospel of St. John: "Before I proceed (saith he to his hearers) to explain the words, I will ask one favour of you, which I beseech you not to deny me, for it is nothing burdensome, nothing hard to be done, which I ask, and much more profitable to you than to me. What is it then which I desire? That one day in the week, at least on Saturday, you take care to read that part of the Gospel which I am to explain to you, that every one

* Acts xvii. 11.

† In cap. 3. Epist. ad Rom. vol. 4. p. 504. col. 2. Par. 1759.]

take it into his hands, repeat it often at home, consider the scope of it, mark what is clear, and what obscure, and what seems repugnant in it; and weighing all things before-hand do you thus present yourselves to hear? This will bring no small profit both to you and to me. For it will be no great labour to me, to make you understand the force of the Gospel, when you have before rendered it, as to the words at least, familiar to yourselves at home. And you will be not only more quick and ready to hear and learn, but also to teach others. There are many here present, who hear and endeavour to retain the words and what I say upon them, who would receive no great benefit though I should spend a whole year in preaching upon them. Why? because by the bye, and only for a little time here, they apply their minds to them," &c.

I grant, "it was preaching, teaching, and instructing by word of mouth, was the means appointed by Christ for planting his Gospel." But what then? Doth it follow, that when the Gospel was written, it might not be read by the vulgar? No more, doubtless, than that it might not be read by the learned; for that was the means used for planting it among both. Nor can we well imagine, how it could at first be otherwise planted, because it was then to be confirmed by miracles. And suppose it were true, that the Apostles who were thus commanded to preach, had never any command to write; is not this as good a reason, why the priests may not read the Gospel, as why the people may not?

In the words following, the Representer sums up his argument, *viz.* "Since then the Papists are taught and instructed in the word of God, the very same way that Christ himself taught all those that followed him; since they are instructed in it, the same way the Apostles themselves observed and commanded, by submitting to and obeying those that are over them: why do you say they are deprived of the word of God?" I answer; for these reasons:

1. Because that which they have of the word of God, is but very little, in comparison of what they are deprived of.
2. Because much of that little, if taken with those glosses, and understood in that sense which they put upon it, is not the word of God.
3. Because much of that little, which in popular discourse is delivered to them as the word of God, is nothing less. This the Representer must be forced to grant, unless he can prove these two things.

1. That both parts of a contradiction may be true: for nothing is more obvious, than that those propositions are, by many of the Roman clergy, delivered as the word of God, which are contradictory the one to the other. For example: one says, the wood of the cross is to be adored; another, that Jesus Christ only is to be adored in the presence of the cross. That the Pope has power to depose kings, one makes it heresy to deny, another to affirm it.

2. That that may be the word of God, which is plainly contrary to that what God hath taught in the holy Scriptures; for so are many things taught by many of their pastors: for example; that the sacred body of the mother of Jesus is endowed with a super-seraphical activity, whereby she can render herself present in a moment to all her devotees; vieweth all their actions, words, and concerns, and can aid them at whatever distance at all times, whatever their calamities be, &c.* When the Representer shall have proved these two propositions: that contradictions may be true, and that that may be the word of God that is plainly contrary to the word of God, we may then perhaps be persuaded to believe that the Roman priests speak nothing but oracles.

SECT. II.

Inference II.—That which is mentioned as the next misconstruction, or false inference of the Protestants, is this: “that the Papist takes up all his belief upon truth, he is led through all the mysteries of his religion by the hand, without seeing which way or whither he goes. All from beginning to end is blindness and ignorance,” &c.† And what says the Representer in answer to this? “A Papist believes as the Church of God (that is the present Church of Rome) teaches.” And does not he take all his belief upon trust, who without examination believes whatsoever his Church teaches? But how does he know what his Church teaches? His priest tells him. Well, he believes as the Church teaches, he believes the Church teacheth this or that, because his priest tells him so; does he not then take his Church’s faith, and his own too, upon trust from his priest? No: for he does not believe “blindly, but knowingly and understandingly, so far as the lit-

* *Contemplations on the Life and Glory of the Holy Mary*, p. 69.

† *Chap. 7.* p. 49.

teness of human reason, and his own capacity will give him leave. How does this appear?" Because "in order to this, his Church has provided him of variety of *learned* books, explicating to him the sense of the Scriptures, as likewise the articles of his creed, every mystery of his religion, the ten commandments, the sacraments, and the whole duty of a Christian, and this in such numbers, both in Latin and English, and other languages," &c. What? Learned books for the unlearned? And in Latin too, for those who understand not a word of Latin? May they not learn as much from the Latin Bible, as from a Latin explication? Well may they believe *understandingly*, when their Church has provided them of such books for that purpose, which are above their understanding. But besides these, he has books in English, and other languages. In England he is better provided of books, than in other countries; but does he not take all these upon trust too, since he is not suffered to examine so much as one of them by the Scripture? Yea, is not his belief of these books, a plain argument that he believes blindfold? Because many such things are contained in them, which if he impartially examined he could never yield his assent to. That I may not be thought to speak at random, I shall give a single instance (out of that great number I could produce) in each of the heads before-mentioned. 1. For the sense of Scripture: he must take it upon trust, who takes that dominion ascribed to the blessed Virgin, to be meant in these texts quoted for it, *viz.* that God hath given her sovereign dominion in heaven over the angels ("the queen stood at thy right hand," Psalm xliv.), on earth over men ("kings reign by me," &c. Prov. xviii.), and over hell and the devil ("she shall bruise thy head," Gen. iii.).*

2. For the articles of his creed: he believes upon trust who believes contradictions; and so does he, who believes that by the Catholic Church in the Creed, is meant the Roman Catholic. 3. For the mysteries of his religion, I appeal to all men, whether he does not take them upon trust, who takes them as they are delivered in a book lately printed;† particularly this of the nativity of the mother of Jesus: "That holy Mary, being by a singular privilege (in regard of her Divine maternity), perfectly innocent, holy, and full of grace, wisdom, and all virtues, in the first positive instant of the infusion of her

* Jesus, Maria, Joseph. p. 167, 168.

† Contemplations on the Life and Glory of the Holy Mary.

soul, she from thenceforth ever exercised the sublime operations of the contemplative and unitive life, without recourse to images of imagination, or dependence on sense, by the help of abstractive lights, divinely infused; representing, 1. The several essences, attributes and motions of the whole body of the creation, in their several degrees and stations. 2. The divinity of God, with its manifold emanations, operations and unexplicable comprehensions. 3. And the humanity of Jesus, with all the orders of grace, mysteries of salvation, and extatic loves of the saints, whereby her great soul was so completely actuated, even in the womb of her mother, that her contemplations, sallies of love, and unions with God were restless, ever increasing in their vigour, and still expatiating through the vast motions and methods of mystical love. Thus Divine Mary became still more acceptable to God, replenished with grace, and absorpt in the abyss of supernatural perfection; which wonderfully increased the languishings of angels, souls in limbo, and of her holy parents for the hour of her birth.”* This is a mystery (and so are several others in the same book), which, I fear, the vulgar are not able to believe knowingly. 4. For the Ten Commandments he must believe blindly, who believes he has them entire in his Catechism, when so considerable a part is left out; “Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above.” &c. Or that he hath the fourth commandment, sincerely delivered in these words: “Remember to sanctify the holy days.” We are told, I know, in the Abridgment of Christian Doctrine, that the Church cannot be accused of the least shadow of omitting any parts of the Commandments.† But how can that be, when it is before acknowledged, that a great part of the text is omitted? “Because in no Catholic Bible, is there one syllable left out.” But what is this, to the vulgar, who are not permitted to read any Catholic Bible? who know no more of the Commandments, than what they find in their Catechism. 5. As to the sacraments: had he not need trust strongly, who believes that Christ instituted the sacrament of order, in saying, “Do this?”‡ Behold here the lights the vulgar Papist enjoys! Is it not now as manifest as light itself, “that whosoever reproaches him with blind-

* Ibid. p. 44, 45.

† P. 113.

‡ Rhemes Test. Annot. in Luke 22. ver. 19, Abridgment of Christ's Doct. p. 184, 185.

ness in the midst of so many lights, may with as good reason prove him to be in the dark, when noon-day shines upon him!"

Especially considering, "that besides these books, the Church hath given direction to all parish-priests, to explicate on Sundays and holy days, the Gospel, and some mystery of the faith, to such as are under their charge," &c. But have we not reason to believe, that the explications of their parish priests are answerable to those we meet with in their books? And then, notwithstanding these helps and assistances, not only some, but many of his Church, may believe without understanding; who cannot be condemned of negligence and sloth, in the use of those means their Church has provided for them. And if the parish priests are generally as ignorant as many learned men of the Church of Rome tell us they are, even they themselves believe without understanding, and therefore much more the people.

But by what follows, the vulgar Papists are very blameworthy, if they know not the Scripture better than the vulgar of any other communion: "For it is an unquestionable truth, that when a book contains high mysteries of religion, mysteries superior to all sense and reason, and those not delivered in expressions suited to every capacity, but obnoxious to various interpretations, that the people is, in all probability, likely to have more of the true sense of this book, and to be better informed of the truth of the mysteries it contains, who are instructed in it by the learned of that communion, and taught it by their pastors, prelates, and those whom God hath placed over them, to govern and feed the flock; than any other people, who have the book put into their own hands, to read it, and search it, and satisfy themselves."

In answer to which, I shall propose a few questions to the Representer.

1. Whether it be an unquestionable truth, that when a book contains not only high mysteries, but such things as, for the far greater part, are not above the capacity of the vulgar; that he shall have more of the true sense of this book who is instructed in it by his pastors only, than he who is instructed in it by them, and studies it himself too? In all sciences there are some mysteries; now is he likely to understand any other science better, who takes only the instructions of his teachers, than he who, together with them, diligently studies it himself also?

2. Suppose nothing but high mysteries were contained in this book ; yet may not he as well understand these mysteries, who is instructed in them by the learned, and searches them himself, as he that trusts only to the instructions of the learned.

3. Is it for the sake of these high mysteries, that the reading of this book is forbidden the vulgar ? If so, then, 1. Why was it not forbidden sooner ? Since these mysteries were in it from the beginning. 2. Why are other books published for their use, in which are mysteries superior to all sense and reason, and those not delivered in expressions suited to every capacity, but such as may be wrested by the unlearned and unstable to their own destruction ? Such I mean, as the Contemplations of the Life and Glory, &c. Jesus, Maria, Joseph, &c. And therefore,

4. Is it not evident that it is not for the sake of the mysteries, but of those things which are too plain and obvious to vulgar understandings, that the reading of this book is prohibited ?

But he confirms what he says, both by reason and Scripture.

1. By reason. "Are not the pastors more capable of teaching the people, than the people are of teaching themselves ?" An admirable reason ! Let us see how it will hold in other matters. Is not the master or tutor more capable of teaching the scholar, than the scholar is of teaching himself ? He therefore will have more of the true sense of any book in logic, physics, or metaphysics, than never looks into the book himself, but only hears a lecture once in a week or month from his tutor, upon some part of it, than he that makes the book his constant study.

2. As admirable are the proofs from Scripture. "We know Moses gave the book of the law to the Levites, to keep and read it every seven years to the people : and in King Jehosaphat's reign the priests and Levites did read it, and teach the people ; so did Jeremiah by God's command, so Isaiah, so Ezekiel.—And did not our blessed Saviour take the book of the prophet, and read it, and expound it to the people ? And was not this the office of the Apostles and deacons ?" &c.

The argument is this : The priests and Levites read the book of the law, and taught the people ; so did Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel : yea, our Saviour and his Apostles read and expounded the Scripture to the people : therefore they will

understand more of the true sense of the Scripture, who never read it, than those who do. What pity was it, that Moses, and the prophets, and our Saviour and his Apostles, did not understand the force of this argument? For if they had, they would, no doubt, have forbidden the people to read the Scripture, and then we had never been pestered with those sects and heresies that sprang from it: but they were altogether unacquainted with the Roman politics. Though therefore they read the Scripture to the people themselves, and read it in the vulgar tongue, yet they left it free to the people to read it, and not only so, but laid it as a duty upon them.

He adds: "For this intention was Ananias sent to Saul, Peter to Cornelius, and Philip to the Eunuch, who professedly owned, he could not understand the prophet in so necessary a point as that of the *Messias*, without an interpreter:"* none of which instances make any thing for him, but that of the Eunuch makes much against him. For the Eunuch was reading the prophet Isaiah, though he could not understand him; and St. Chrysostom† and others‡ observe that God, as a reward of his diligence and piety, in doing what he was able, sent him a teacher. And what follows hence? First, That they ought not to forbear the reading of the Scriptures, who do not understand them. Secondly, That they who thus read them with a pious mind, shall be graciously accepted and rewarded by God. These inferences are not mine, but both of them St. Chrysostom's.

It follows: "Since therefore the Papists, in delivering the Scriptures, come nearest to this method, commanded by God in the old law, prescribed and practised by Christ and his Apostles in the new," &c. If he means that this was the only method commanded by God in the old law, and prescribed by Christ in the new, I have already shewn it to be false. If he mean that this was one method, then how widely remote the conclusion is from the premises, will appear only by setting them together. One method commanded by God in the old law, was, that the priests and Levites should read the law, and explain it to the

* P. 51.

† Hom. 35. in Genes. [ut supra, vol. 4. p. 350. Par. 1721.]

‡ Non intelligebat Scripturæ sensum homo prophanus et idiota; et tamen quoniam pio studio legebat, subito mittitur illi Philippus interpres, vertitur Eunuchus in virum, tingitur aqua, et ater Æthiops niveo agni immaculati vellere induitur; subitoque ex mancipio prophanæ Reginæ, fit servus Jesu Christi. Eras. Epist. l. 29. Epist. 82.

people: the like method was prescribed and practised by Christ and his Apostles in the new law; therefore the Papists in withholding the Scripture from the common people come nearest to the method commanded by God in the old law, and prescribed by Christ and his Apostles in the new. Where lies the connection? And yet I confess, it follows as clearly as this, that the Scriptures were not in the vulgar tongue, because St. Paul said to Timothy, "Thou hast learned the holy Scriptures from a child."* I should have thought the quite contrary had followed, had I not been taught otherwise, by one that follows the guidance of the infallible Church. Had the Representer spoken the whole truth in the premises, the conclusion had been unavoidable for the Protestants, who in delivering the Scripture to the people, observe the same method that God appointed under the law, and Christ and his Apostles under the Gospel. What follows upon this head, we have had before.

SECT. III.

Inference III. That which the Representer reckons as another misconstruction of the Protestants, is this: "That the reason why the vulgar Papists are not permitted to read the Bible, is for fear lest they should discover the errors of their religion."† It is true the Protestants assign this for one reason; but when he brings in the Protestant saying, "I can apprehend no other," he misrepresents them, because they assign others, though they take this to be the chief. Now this, he says, is a "misconstruction that lies so open, that there needs no more than a glimpse of reason to discover it." Let us therefore see, whether there be so much as a glimpse in those pretended reasons he brings to confute it; which are these two.

1. "That though the vulgar and unlearned of the Papists have not in some countries the Bible promiscuously allowed amongst them; yet that in those same countries, and all others, there is no college, university, community, or place of learning, but where the Scriptures are publicly read and expounded."‡

2. "That there can be no ground for this pretension, at least here in England, where the Bible in English, or the Rhemes Testament, is to be found in most Catholic families."§

* *Ledesma de Script. Divinis quavis lingua non legendis.* c. 5.

† Chap. 8. p. 53.

‡ Ibid.

§ P. 54.

1. "That in all Popish countries, there is no college, university, community, or place of learning, but where the Scripture is publicly read and expounded." Now if they (*viz.* the Protestants) should consider this, "is it possible (says the Representor) for them to believe, that that restraint is upon the vulgar, for fear they should see into the follies of their religion?" Is it possible; and because we see a Papist can believe contrary to sense and reason, I add, that it is not only possible, but there is a great reason for Protestants to believe this. And that,

1. Because even Papists themselves believe it. So did the bishops that met at Bononia, to consult about the establishment of the Roman Church: for having given it as their last and weightiest advice, to Julius III. "That he labour to the uttermost, that as little as may be of the Gospel, especially in the vulgar tongue, be read in the cities that were under his dominions, and that that little might suffice which is wont to be read in the Mass:" they add, "This in short is the book which, beside others, hath raised those tempests and whirlwinds which we are almost carried away with: and the truth is, if any man shall diligently consider this book, and then view in order one after another, the things which are wont to be done in our Churches, he will see that there is a very great difference between them, and that this our doctrine is altogether diverse from that, and oft-times even contrary to it; which as soon as men understand, being stirred up by some learned men of our adversaries, they never give over clamouring against us, till they have rendered us odious to all men."*

Of the same belief was Peter Sutor, as appears by these words: "Since many things are delivered to be observed, which are not expressly in the holy Scriptures, will not the unlearned, observing these things, be ready to murmur, complaining that so great burdens are laid upon them, by which their Gospel-liberty is sorely abridged? And will they not be easily withdrawn from observing the constitutions of the

* *Hic illa est liber, qui præter cæteros hasce nobis tempestates ac turbines concitavit, quibus prope abrepti sumus. Et sane si quis illum diligenter expendat, deinde quæ in nostris fieri Ecclesiis consueverunt, singula ordine contempletur; videbit plurimum inter se dissidere, et hanc doctrinam nostram ab illa prorsus diversam esse, ac sæpe contrariam etiam: Quod simul atque homines intelligunt, à docto scilicet aliquo adversariorum nostrorum stimulat, non ante clamandi in nos finem faciunt, donec re tandem pervulgata nos invisos omnibus reddiderint. Consil. de Rom. Eccles. Stab. [Ut supra.]*

Church, when they shall see that they are not contained in the law of Christ?"*

To which may be added all those (which make a vast number) who (as the Cardinal Rodolpho Pio di Carpi) believe, that if the Bible be in the vulgar tongue, all men will become heretics.† For who do they usually mean by heretics, but those who by reading the Bible, do first discover, and then renounce their errors? Now though, I confess, there are some things believed by Papists, which I think it impossible for a Protestant to believe; yet I doubt not but the Representer will grant, that the belief of this is as easy to a Protestant as it is to a Papist: and that since it is believed by Papists, there is very good reason why Protestants should believe it.

2. Since they allow the vulgar the Ten Commandments in their own tongue, what probable reason can be given why they leave out this part: "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image," &c.‡ but this; that they dare not let their laity compare their doctrine and their practice, with this Scripture? It is, I know, commonly said that this is done in compliance with the weak memories of the people: but he must be of a weak understanding, who is satisfied with this reason; especially considering, how tedious some of their offices of devotion are, which are composed for the use of the laity.

3. It is no thanks to them that the Bible is not denied to the learned, because it is impossible it should be kept from them, as long as it is suffered in any language. But it is plain they are afraid of them, in that they do not allow them, however learned and pious, but at the bishop's discretion, to read any versions of the Old Testament; nor do they give the bishop leave to permit any man, how learned soever, to read any versions of the New, made by those who are censured by their Church, but confine them to the vulgar edition.§ And

* Sed cum multa palam tradantur observanda, quæ Sacris in literis expresse non habentur; nonne idiotæ hæc animadvertentes facile murmurent, conquereptes cur tantæ sibi imponantur Sarcinæ, quibus et libertas Evangelica ita graviter elevatur? Nonne et facile retrahentur ab observantia Institutionum Ecclesiasticarum, quando eas in lege Christi animadverterint non contineri? De Translat. Bibl. c. 22. Fo. 96.

† Soave's Hist. of the Council of Trent, l. 5. p. 460. [ut supra.]

‡ Though to stop their adversaries' mouths, they now put these words into the English Catechisms.

§ Reg. 3. Ind. Trid. [Labbe, Concil. vol. 14. p. 953. Lut. Par. 1672.]

to make as sure of them as they can, they tie them up as close as they are able, from giving any such interpretation of it as may be prejudicial to their new faith. And yet not trusting to this security, they endeavour, as much as may be, to conceal from them those Scriptures which are repugnant to their doctrine. Which is,

4. A plain argument, that it is the Bible itself they take to be mischievous to them. Why else, 1. Did they blot those words out of the margin and index of Robert Stephen's Bible, which were the same with those in the text? For example: "Abraham was justified by faith. He that believeth in Christ shall not die for ever." They that blotted these out of the index, that the reader might not thereby be directed to find them, would they not (if they durst) have blotted them out of the text too? 2. Why else have they purged, not only out of the ancient Fathers, but many learned writers of their own Church, many passages of the Scripture itself? 3. Why was it commended as a most meritorious act in John Della Cava, archbishop of Benevento, that "though he had not openly and expressly condemned the Gospel, yet obscurely and covertly he had? Because in his large catalogue of heretics, he had reprobated a great part of that doctrine which is contained in the Gospel; especially some certain heads which were most opposite to the Church of Rome."*

The Representer proceeds: "If their religion be so contrary to Scripture as you pretend, is it not more likely the learned should make this discovery in their reading the Bible, than the vulgar, if they had the like liberty?" &c.

To which I return these two things:

1. If the learned are as free from prejudice, pride, vain-glory, covetousness, and other evil affections, which darken men's minds, it is more likely they should make this discovery than the vulgar; if not, the vulgar are better qualified to make it than they: for though learning, when joined with a sincere love of truth, is a great advantage for the discovery of it; yet when destitute of this, it is as great a hindrance. The learned among the Jews, in the days of our Saviour, are a demonstrative proof of this. Though Moses and all the prophets bore testimony to him, yet the Scribes and Pharisees were not able to see it: why? Because they were prepossessed with the prejudices of a pompous Messias, they sought glory of men,

* Consil. de Rom. Eccles. Stab. [Ut supra, fol. 102. p. 1.]

they had carnal affections, and a worldly interest to serve; though therefore all the characters of the Messias were visible in him, yet because he was not a Messias for their turn, they could not discern them; I say, not only they did not, but, without first laying aside their corrupt affections, they could not: and so our Saviour himself says, "Ye cannot hear my word."* And "how can ye believe which receive honour one of another?"† How wise and prudent soever they were in other matters, they were not capable of the truths of the Gospel; and therefore they were hid from them, while they were revealed to babes.‡

Now how few, in comparison, of the learned in the Church of Rome, have not some carnal interest to serve? How few are not prepossessed with some such false principle, that be the Scripture never so clear against them, will so blind their eyes, that they shall not be able to discern it? Should the Church of Rome teach murder and adultery to be virtues, he who makes it a fundamental article of his faith that she cannot err, would not be able to see that they are sins; but would find out some other sense of these Commandments than the words plainly import.

In short; this argument the learned Jews made use of against our blessed Saviour: "Have any of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law, are cursed."§ As much as to say, were he the true Messias, the learned Pharisees who study the law would certainly know it; since therefore they do not believe on him, no heed is to be given to the ignorant multitude. Were therefore this argument of force, it would have justified the vulgar Jews in rejecting of Christ. But,

2. Many of their learned men have made this discovery. How many such were the chief instruments of the Reformation? And they, doubtless, discovered the errors of their Church, before they forsook it. How many continually since have forsaken their communion, in spite of all worldly motives to the contrary? How many, who have not left their communion, have given abundant testimony by their writings that they were convinced of their errors, some in one thing, some in another? Cardinal Cajetan, and Cardinal Contarenus, will be owned for as learned men as most of their time; and they

* John viii. 43.

† Matth. xi. 25.

‡ John v. 44.

§ John vii. 48, 49.

discovered the error of prayer and service in an unknown tongue. Erasmus in the last age, and Arnaud and his brethren the Jansenists in this, have exposed to all the world the error I now write against. The learned men of the Church of Rome, who have rejected the Apocryphal Books from the canon of Scripture, are too many to be particularly mentioned; for that they are no part of the canon, was catholic doctrine at Rome itself (as a learned bishop of our own Church has proved) but ten years before the Council of Trent. And whosoever has read the history of that Council, cannot but see, that the denial of the cup to the laity was discovered to be an error by many learned men of that Church. Yea, the great article of transubstantiation, many of their most learned men, both in the present and in foregoing ages, could never persuade themselves to believe. How many more of their errors have been discovered, and published to the world by Cassander, Wicelius, Erasmus, Picus Mirandula, and many other learned men, who died in communion with them, I shall not stay to mention: but shall only make this inference, that the Representer would never have argued at this rate, had he not vainly thought that the Protestants are as little acquainted with the writings of the Papists, as the Papists generally are with those of the Protestants.

What follows concerning mechanics, and apron-strings, the anvil, the needle and the ell, I suppose he did not intend for arguments, but only for ornaments and embellishments, and therefore I pass them over.

He adds: "Is it probable, that every man amongst the Papists, no sooner becomes scholar, but he turns atheist?" No. "That upon their search in the Bible, they plainly see all the errors of their religion, and yet are so bewitched as to go on boldly and jocosely to the devil, without speaking a word, or moving a step to save their own souls, or their relations?"* I will not say, that every learned Papist sees (all) the errors of their religion: it may suffice, that many of them have discovered many of their errors, and have written boldly against them. And for those who discover their errors, and yet profess to believe them, it is not necessary they should be atheists: I hope those gentlemen are no atheists, who for several years late past, have believed with the Church of Rome and professed with the Church of England, their religion

approves equivocations, and mental reservation; though I confess, that very argument is so great a bar to my turning Papist, that I cannot at present imagine that I can ever be reconciled to that religion, which allows such gross hypocrisies. I hope by this time the Representer sees how weak and ill-grounded his own arguments are.

2. But he asks: "What ground can there be for this pretension, at least here in England, where the Bible in English, or the Rhemes Testament is to be found in most Catholic families?" If it be so, who is to be thanked for it? Not their Churchmen: for though they are more indulgent to their people here in England, yet it is because they dare not be otherwise, since, should they hold them to as strict terms here, as they do where they are in full possession, it might endanger their losing them. Besides, that it is impossible to keep the Bible here, from those who have a mind to read it; for if they have it not with their leave, they can have it without it. But yet, to keep them as much as may be from it, they endeavour to persuade them, that it is a sin to read it without leave; and many are so possessed with this belief, that they acknowledge they dare not read it, nor any other book offered to them by Protestants, without first leave obtained from their ghostly father: and were England as much in their power as Spain and Italy are, a Bible in the vulgar tongue would be as rarely found in any family here, as it is in those nations; though I see no reason, but they may freely allow them the Rhemes Testament, because they have so transformed it into their own likeness, that one would think they need fear no danger from it.

"But if," says he, "the prohibition of the Bible be, as you pretend, in other countries, for fear of the vulgar discovering the errors of their religion; how comes it, that they do not make this discovery here?" Some may not make this discovery, because of those invincible prejudices they are prepossessed with: others may not make it, because they do not see with their own eyes, but leave it to their priests to see for them: yet it is strange the Representer should ask, "How comes it they do not make this discovery?" As if none had made it; when, to the great grief of their Church, such vast numbers have long since made it. Does he not know, that one objection against translating the Bible in King Henry VIIIth's days was, that if laymen had the Bible in their mother tongue, it would make them all heretics? Does he not know, how far the event has answered the prediction?

That whereas before, the whole nation was generally of their belief, so many have forsaken them since, that now perhaps one or two in an hundred are as many as they can challenge?

He says, "Many have quitted that communion upon other motives, best known to themselves, but never any one could I meet with, that left them yet by reading and following the Word of God." He has, it seems, met with few who have left them; nor could it be expected he should meet with many; for so many had left them before his time, that few in comparison, remained to leave them now. And those who left their communion in King Henry VIIIth's days, could not leave it upon worldly motives, because, after he gave leave to print the Bible in English, and encouragement to all men to read it, he not only continued a member of the Church of Rome himself, but a zealous persecutor of those who forsook it. But perhaps he "meets with none who desert them now;" if he does not, yet many others do; and I presume, those that forsake them now, their only motive must be "to follow the Word of God."

But "if the reading the Scriptures is such a defeat to Popery as you give out, is it likely those who have been bred up to the reading of the Bible, and have made it their study and companion, should ever embrace that communion?" Not more unlikely, than that those who have been bred up to the reading of the Bible, should embrace divers other opinions and practices, that are utterly inconsistent with it; which we frequently see some men do. Though I question not, but if he examine their converts, he will find but few of them such as have made the Bible their "study and companion." And for those who have been bred up to the reading it, but never concerned themselves to consider it, it is not more unlikely that they should embrace Popery, though never so plainly contrary to it, than that those should who never so much as saw it. I shall not pass a censure upon their late proselytes; but I am persuaded the Representer himself will confess, that some of them are such as they have no reason to boast of.

END OF VOL. V.

